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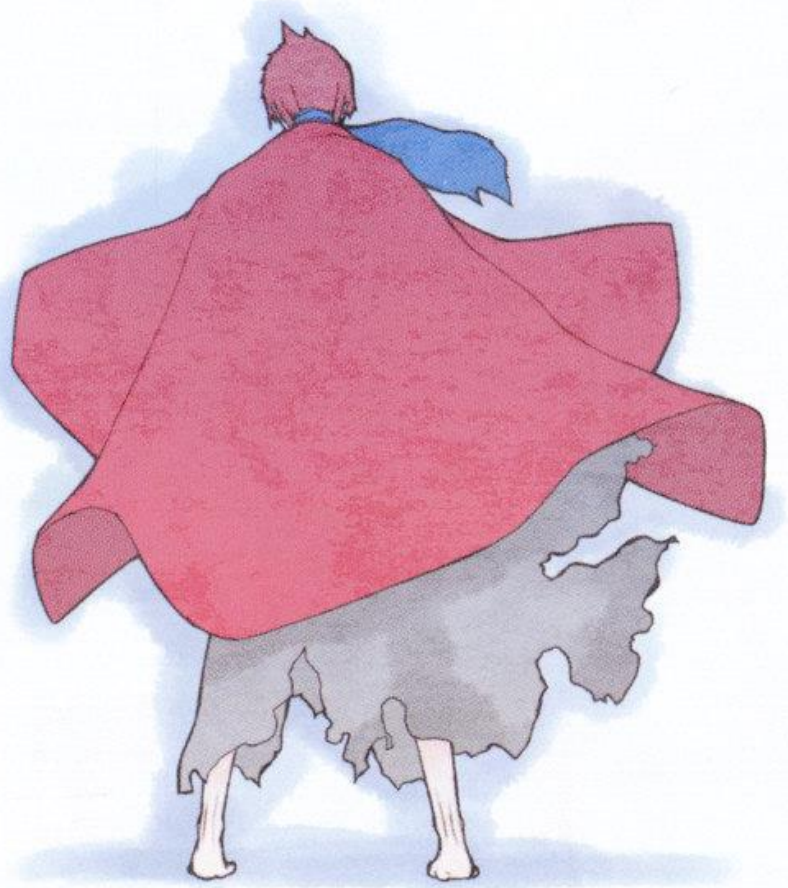
GA文庫



# ダンジョンに出会いを求めるのは間違っているだろうか 4

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プロローグ 始まりの謎
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# ダンジョンに出会いを求めるのは間違っているだろうか

4

## Prologue
The Fastest Boy on the Streets

*Gaya, Gaya*, the guild was surrounded by noise in the early morning.
During the time period from early morning to noon, Adventurers would head over to this spacious hall nonstop. Although there were some people who went to discuss their future in exploring the dungeon with their advisers, the majority of the people were here to collect updated information from the huge bulletin board or from their peers.

As well as the business-type faction notifications of new products being sold and purchasing of new drop loot, the other <Familia> were also concerned with witness reports about unconfirmed rare types. The information made public by the guild had great value to the Adventurers and should not be underestimated.

Facing possible future outcomes, or also collecting information for tomorrow's riches, the majority of information——obviously——should not be neglected.

The strong sunlight illuminated the large hall, numerous demi-humans were moving their hands and legs as they talked.

"WA~. It seems that those Adventurers increased again today."

"Hey, we are still working. Don't talk with me."

Sitting at the window counter, Eina quietly whispered and reminded Misha, who was scratching her own ears.

Just like what she had said, from this morning, there were even more Adventurer figures. Including Eina, each receptionist ladies were currently thinking of taking specific measures and speeding up their pace of work constantly. Up until just now, Eina was bringing the Adventurers around. She could finally take a break now.

Normally, the group people, who like to approach the beautiful receptionist ladies in broad daylight, today, they were sent away packing.

"The God's Meeting is approaching soon. Recently, rumors of <Level Up> had constantly spread between Adventurers……As expected, the main one is that one, the rumor of a Minotaur appearing on the 9th floor."
"……Well, yes. It seems so."

Three days ago, information from a paled-face Lv.1 Adventurer had spread.

That is <The Minotaur appearing on the Upper Floors>.

More than half of the Orario Adventurers were stunned about the news brought by the <Loki's Familia> and requested detailed information to be provided from the guild.

Although Monsters moving between floors occurred quite often, according to popular belief, the magnitude is only going up or down two floors. However, this time, the eyewitness report of the Minotaur was that it had actually came up to the 9th Floor in <Upper Floors>. The distance that separated the Monster's birth place was a 6 Floors difference from the 15th Floor. It was self-evident that this was unusual.
Anyways, this is not the first time that a Minotaur had appeared in the Upper Floors. Just because of this, it had doubled the uneasiness of the Adventurers.

Approximately a month ago——the day Bell encountered Aizu, that Monster had once appeared on the Upper Floors.

It was later said that this incident was an accident caused by the <Loki's Familia> when they were returning from their <Expedition>——although the guild had repeatedly explained this point, the Adventurers did not easily accept it. Among them, ideas were sprouted out such as "Could it be that the Dungeon structure is changing, and causing Minotaurs to be produced on the Upper Floor?"

You're overreacting——Eina and the others could not say such words.

Towards Lv. 1 Adventurers, this is a matter of life and death. If the Middle Floor Monsters were to appear on the Upper Floors, it was impossible for them in continuing to calmly explore.  Because they fight the Monsters every day, this point had already been engraved deep inside their heart. The guild also understood this, thus it was excusable for the Adventurers to surge over here like this.

(……After that day, there was no news from him. Did something happen?)

Under the current situation, Eina was extremely worried about the fact that <Bell had suddenly lost contact>.

Although it has not even been a week since he last came to the guild, her own reasoning told her that she was simply overly anxious……But that boy was nearly killed by that Monster before.  It is possible for her to have such reactions after hearing the phrase, Minotaur.

Once she thought about the matter about Bell, Eina could not sit at ease. Numerous complex feelings surged within her heart.

“Ah, found it—, Eina’s favorite Adventurer-kun.”

“!”

After listening to the prolonged voice of her friend, Eina suddenly raised her head.

She looked ahead and a familiar head with white hair was currently drilling through the gaps of the Adventurers and heading over to this side. After noticing this side’s gaze, Bell’s face suddenly turned red and he smiled.

“Arara, that child, it feels like he is in a good mood?”

“……”

This time, Eina treated Misha’s words as the wind. Her chest felt very warm, following her peace of mind, a smile bloomed on her face. Although she quickly concealed it, her cherry-colored lips could not relax.

Looking at the rabbit-like jump, Bell approached with a happy expression. Although Eina suddenly had the thought of <Not knowing that side’s feelings>, she could not defeat the sense of ease that she had.

“Good morning. Eina-san!”

“Good morning, Bell-kun. Long time no see. You’ve been working hard in exploring……These words, there are no need to ask, right?”

“Yes, I’ve worked hard! Although the last time I entered the Dungeon was a few days ago!”

“Fufu, after all, rest is also important.  When you should rest, you must rest well, isn’t that correct?”

While Eina smiled, she began to talk with Bell, who was in a good mood.

Sitting on the counter seat next to her, Misha also smiled at him. Was it for the sake of Eina? She wanted to stand up. She began to prepare in order to move these documents.

Eina’s eyebrows gently relaxed, she continued speaking.

“Then, what good things happened?”

“Y…You know?”

“Revealing such an expression, anybody can see this, right?”

Looking at Bell, who had placed his hands on his cheeks while giggling, Eina could not help but reveal a wry smile.

It was simple to see that he wanted to reveal the <Good thing> that happened. Using her jade-colored eyes, she conveyed the meaning of “Then, tell me?”.  He then returned to the days when he had finished the Adventurer’s registration and pounded his head with a dazzling expression. Beside her, Misha also concealed her smile and stood up from her chair, carrying a mountain of documents.

He really can’t lie. Eina waited for the next sentence of Bell while having serene feelings of watching a little brother.

“A…Actually……”

“Yes.”

Then a smile that would also make the other side smile appeared. Bell said.

“I finally reached Lv. 2!”

——*Basa, Basa, Basa*, Misha’s mountain of documents fell towards the ground.

Maintaining a state where she faced Bell and Eina from behind, she seemed to have become a rock that was fixed at that spot.

Misha, who had understood Bell's situation through Eina, knew that as an Adventurer, he was a <Rookie, who had not reached two months yet>.

Eina smiled.

Beautifully smiled.

Then, that beautiful smile was frozen stiff and could no longer move.

If it were to be described accurately, it was as if time had stopped.

Putting them aside, the bustling sounds inside the hall still had not changed.

"……Nnn?"

Did I hear wrong? Eina asked and she tilted her head while maintaining her smile.

Her cheeks slightly tightened up.

"So I said, I became a Lv. 2! 3 days ago!"

Bell, who completely did not notice Eina's appearance, energetically replied with the same sentence.

*Buru*, Eina smile trembled together with her entire body.
"Lv.2?"

"Yes!"

"3 days ago?"

'Yes!"

"You didn't lie?"

“Of course!”

“Bell-kun, when did you become an Adventurer?”

“One and a half months ago!”

The conversation ended abruptly.

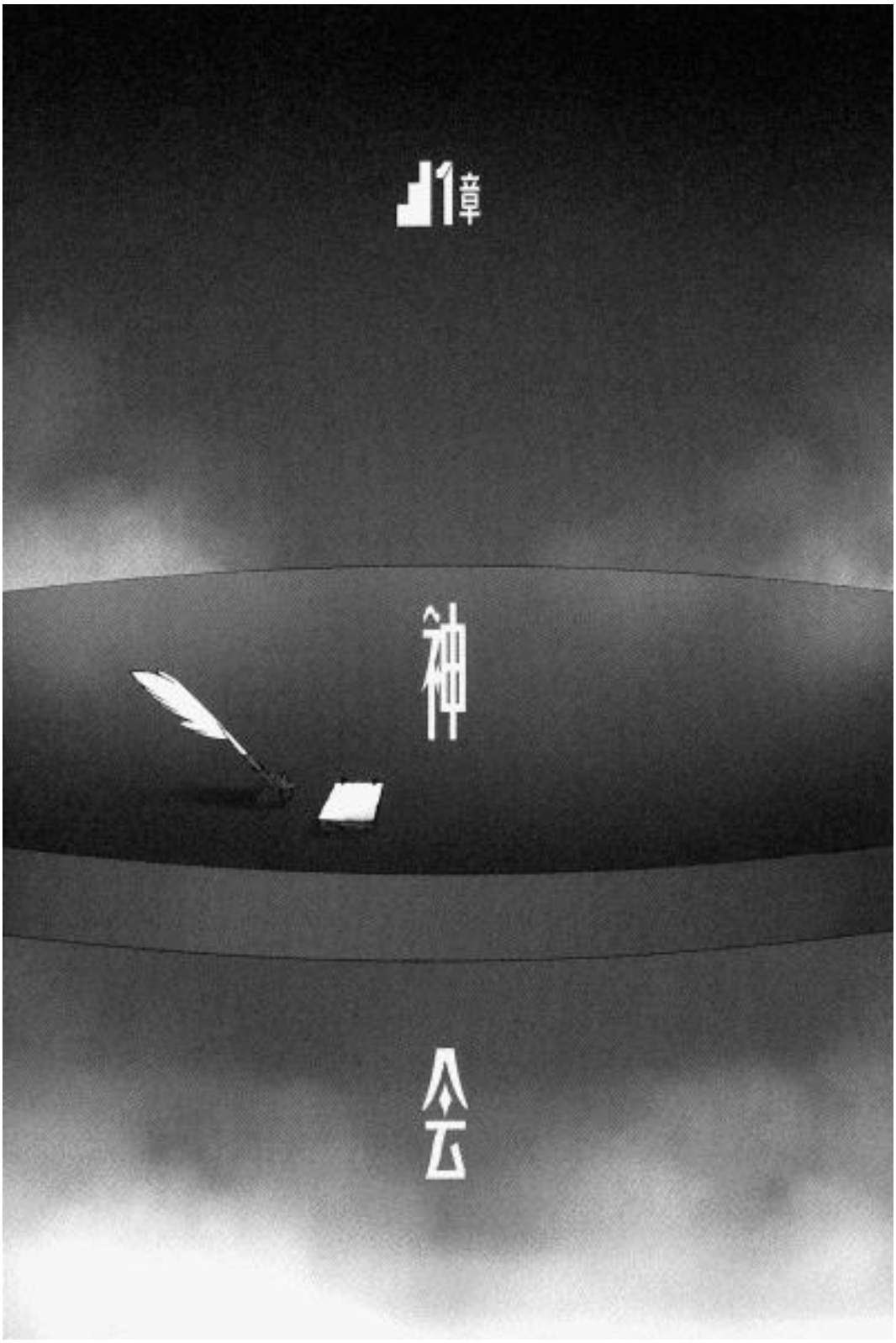
The human and the half-elf were currently exchanging smiles slightly.

The Adventurers that were occupying the window counters revealed a surprised expression when they saw them.

The scene beside the stone statue of Misha remained in a stalemate for a period of time.

Then, *Gishi*, Eina stood up from the chair ——and exploded.
“One and a half month, a Lv. 2~~~

## Chapter 1
God’s Meeting



“Sorry!”

With her hands placed together, Eina bowed her head.

The location was the guild’s headquarters, a private room for interviews. For a one-to-one conversation, it was a spacious room. Although its decorations were somewhat plain, it was fully equipped with the performance of being soundproof.

Inside the room, where there was a table and chairs, Eina sat across Bell and was apologizing.

“Yelling it out in a place where it was filled with other <Familia>……I am really sorry!”

A few minutes ago, due to Eina’s impulsive shout at the hall, everybody at the scene knew about the matter of Bell’s <Level Up>.

No matter how surprised she was, once she recalled the scene where she was attacked by concentrated shocked and surprised gazes, Eina’s face would still burn up.

Leaking out the Adventurer’s information was a big mistake, but more importantly, the sense of shame made Eina’s slender eyes flush red.

“I…It’s not a problem, Eina-san. Level will have to be disclosed to the public anyways……It is only just a matter of time.”

Facing her, who did not have any means to raise her head, Bell said with a bit of confusion.

Towards the words that the boy expressed as if he did not care, Eina embarrassingly moved her line of sight back towards his body.

(Generally, that is true……But the problem is not the <Level Up> itself, but the amount of time to achieve it……)

He reaching Lv.2 only took around a month. It was undoubtedly the shortest time without a precedent. It was to the extent where people would obviously say that it was foolish.

In order to let the Level increase, Achievements—— in other words, defeating a higher level opponent and obtaining higher rank <Experience Points> was indispensable. As one of the few people who knew about Bell's growth rate, Eina's prediction of no matter how much your abilities increase, it would not be the same with Level……was completely destroyed.

Even though that it would be exposed sooner or later, as expected, it would have been good if they hid that fact.

Although it is possible for them to have the optimistic expectation of <There will probably be more people who would regard this kind of unprecedented content as fake and unreal>……But the word <Unprecedented> is a favorite for the Gods who thirst for entertainment.

Just by imagining their thieving, smiling faces, Eina's head began to hurt again.

"About that, Eina-san……?"

"……Ah, it's fine. Sorry, I suddenly daydreamed for a bit."

After Eina, who had the image of Bell being entangled by many Gods in her head, revealed a complex expression, she managed to give out a wry smile.

"Bell-kun, sorry. Can you please listen to my request first? I am sorry for making you come in here……But there is also a job that I must do."

"Ah, okay, it's not a problem. What is it?"

"I hope that you will tell me your activity records as an Adventurer up till now."

"Eh……?"

"It's fine if it's in general. Like what kind of Monsters did you fight or what kind of Adventurer's Requests (Quest) you accepted."

Eina prepared a quill and parchment on the table as she said it.

If it was information that would improve the quality of the Adventurers, the guild would normally disclose it publicly to the extent where it would not cause damage to the interests of the <Familia>. This was to increase the recovery efficiency of the <Magic Stone> that brings great benefit.

If you were to talk about Bell who successfully achieved an unprecedented<Level Up>, his <Experience Points> were the focus of much attention. Probably, they would have to provide his activity record to other Adventurers anonymously.

Simply put, it is to <Let other Adventurers to refer to Bell's growth and become stronger>.

The level of Adventurers rising would also mean reducing the number of victims. Just by this fact, it was enough for Eina to actively take action. She was paying attention to not record the other side's privacy as she listened about Bell's experience.

Then, Bell's words were traced back to 3 days ago.

The second headache hit Eina.

"M…Minotaur……"

She used her right hand to press her head that was leaning backwards.

——3 days ago, Bell encountered and defeated a Minotaur on the 9th floor.

The words spoken in order nearly made Eina faint. <Loki's Familia>'s low-level members also made a report to the guild and it matched with Bell's testimony.

Eina recalled the scene and understood the reason why the members only vaguely answered when they were asked which faction killed the Monster. It seems like a Lv. 1 Adventurer defeated a Minotaur. Even if they said it, there will be no one that would believe it.

Eina, who was enduring a sense of dizziness, widened her heavy eyelids and angrily glared at Bell.

Towards Eina's "Even though I told you not to take risks" disapproval gaze, Bell could only straighten his body after sweating.

(Really now, what kind of Magic did you use)

In the end, how could a Lv. 1 Adventurer defeat a Minotaur that was ranked as a Lv.2 by himself, I really want to use an hour to ask about it.

"……Haaa. I pretty much understand now. About my words, Bell-kun compl~etely did not intend to abide by them."

"Ehhhh!? No, that is……I'm sorry."

Facing Eina, who closed her eyes and threw a fit as she turned her head to one side, Bell panicked and attempted to justify his actions. However, his voice was getting weaker and weaker and in the end, he apologized as he bowed his head.

Opening one eye and glancing at the crestfallen Bell, Eina calmed down slightly and reflected inside her heart that "I should be a little bit more mature".

However, it was the truth that she was quite worried as Bell was not aware of his own actions.

Because if Bell had taken one wrong step, it was possible that he would not be standing here.

"……Bell-kun, these words of mine may not be necessarily correct as I was not at the scene. Perhaps your judgment of not easily deciding to run away was the best choice."

"Eina-san……"

"Although I may not have the qualifications to butt in……but, however? No matter at what time, you must not forget about this fact……If you were to die, then everything becomes meaningless."

Please——While saying this, Eina looked towards Bell.

Coming back alive is the most important thing——she did not conceal her feelings and conveyed it out.

Bell stopped his actions and nodded with an honest expression.

Their gazes intersecting with each other lasted for a while. Afterwards, Eina gently cleared her throat.

As if she was sweeping away the sentimental atmosphere, she decisively extended her finger in front of Bell.

“To sum it up, listen carefully? Absolutely do not be reckless. Do you understand?”

“Y…Yes!”

After poking Bell’s nose as he moaned, *uguu*, Eina straightened up her body on top of the chair and, *fu*, laughed.
If it’s today, this incomprehensive style of scolding him should end here.

While Eina gently shook her tea-colored hair, she gave a gentle smile towards Bell.

“……Bell-kun, congratulations on reaching Lv.2. You’ve worked hard.”

Bell, who was clutching his nose with his hands, widened his eyes. Then, he seemed to be genuinely happy and smiled through his tears.

If it was not for her wishful thinking, the words that she was currently saying were probably the words that Bell wanted to hear the most.

Looking at the boy, who expressed his thanks “Thank you very much” with flushed cheeks, Eina, who was constantly worrying about him, unconsciously felt thousands of feelings surging through her mind.

“Then, are you just reporting about the <Level Up> matter today? Or is there something else you are finding me for?”

“Ah, yes……Actually, there is something that I wanted to ask Eina-san for her opinion.”

After waiting for Eina-san to calm down and confirming his schedule, with an “I almost forgot” as the starting phrase, Bell prepared to reveal the other reason he came.

Eina simply said “Okay, just ask” and smiled gladly.

“That is about <Development Ability>……”

“Ahh, I see. Because Bell-kun leveled up to Lv.2”

It was the ability that is discovered, connecting the existing<Basic Ability>.

The time when it is discovered is during <Level Up>. During every Level Up, there was the possibility of adding it onto the <Status>. <Development Ability> had a different special characteristic compared to the Basic Ability, or rather it was the fruition of a specific career ability and it could be strengthened.

“If that’s the case, then could it be that there are multiple Development Abilities to choose?”

“Yes. Although I have already discussed it with Kami-sama, I felt that it is still better to carefully select it with Eina-san’s opinion as a reference……”

So that’s what it was. Eina nodded her head.

Whether or not a Development Ability would be discovered was affected by the <Experience Points> accumulated repeatedly. The abilities that are developed is related to the actions of the person who received the <God’s Grace>.

If there was not a great deal of <Experience Points>, then even if they <Level Up>, a Development Ability would not be discovered. On the contrary, as long as there were <Experience Points> that met the conditions, then it is possible to discover numerous candidates for the ability. Although every <Level Up> could only acquire one ability, discovering one was unrestricted.

Development Ability would be shown in the <Status> only through <Level Up>.

So, strictly speaking, Bell has not reached Lv. 2 yet.

It was the hesitation period of selecting an ability. Waiting until the last ability was updated and letting Hestia personally replace the entire <Status>. In other words, currently it was in the so-called holding back state.

“How many abilities can you choose?”

“3. However, there was an ability that is not that clear……”

Yes, yes, Eina nodded her head while she recorded Bell’s Development Ability onto the parchment.

The first one was the <Abnormal Resistance> that defends against the major symptoms of <Poison>. Although it was not flashy, it was viewed as a treasure by Adventurers, who were plagued by a variety of abnormal statuses in the Dungeon. Adventurers, who were often subjected to the <Purple Moth> poison powder on the Dungeon Upper Floors would often earn this ability at a relatively early stage.

The next one was <Hunter> that is specially used to deal with Monsters. As long as they have faced the same type of Monster once and earned <Experience Points>, their abilities would be strengthened. It was extremely harsh to find it as it had the condition of being only found at Lv.2 <Level Up>, and defeating a large amount of Monsters in a short period of time. <Hunter> was viewed as a valuable ability. It was needless to say it for Adventurers, it was even an extremely popular ability between the Gods.

Then, the third one was……

“……<Luck>?”

“Yes……”

Eina stopped writing with her quill and continued to blink.

This is because she, who was well-versed in the knowledge of <Status> due to her work, has never heard of this ability.

The effects could still be vaguely perceived. That it literally means <Luck will become Better>.

The problem is what kinds of forms would be used to show that Luck would become better.

“About that, what did Goddess Hestia say?”

“She said that she was a little perplexed……”

There was no helping it, this was natural. Eina said this phrase in her heart.

Up till now, the discovered intelligence about <Status> had been validated and analyzed from a long time ago when the Gods had descended to the Lower World.

Even the Gods themselves, who awakened the <Status>, would not be able to discern the abilities that were developed by the children with <Grace>. Aside from the initial basic abilities, all of the <Status> was based on the <Experience Points>. In other words, it was a thing to reveal the possibilities of the people from the Lower World. Therefore, this is why the Gods cherish and watch over their child like a parent. Only this fact, even to the noble Gods, was still an unknown world.

Because of this, whenever the Gods hear the words rare skill and the like, they will be elated to the extent of dancing with joy. To most Gods, <Unknown> is an irreplaceable <Gourmet Meal>.

You’ve got me, Eina frankly thought this.

It was an ability that has been never recorded by the guild and was never heard of before.

That is a genuine <Rare Ability>.

Probably, Bell was the first person to discover this Development Ability.

If it was only <Abnormal Resistance> or <Hunter>, Eina may be able to place her own opinions together and make a recommendation, but towards something completely unknown, Eina could not speak out her own speculations.

“Ah, but……”

Bell sighed as if he wandered back from the forest of thinking, then he seemed to recall something and said.

“Although it was only Kami-sama’s intuition……It may be something like <Divine Protection>, which was what Kami-sama said.”

No matter what kind of Goddess they are, a God’s insight is not to be underestimated. If this is what Hestia guessed after looking at Bell’s ability, then perhaps it would be closer to the core of it.

“Divine Protection”……In other words, an extraordinary talisman that unknowingly activates it effect. Perhaps it is borrowing the God’s Power to protect the target.

Although this was only within the range of speculation, once she thought of it like this, Eina felt that was extremely necessary for it to be kept.

Sighing, *Fu*, Eina suddenly stopped thinking. In short, she should not report to the higher ups. It was in consideration for Bell to not stand out even further.
“Yes, perhaps it is like what she said. If we were to look for other possibilities that have been said to be <Lucky>, from an Adventurer’s perspective……Maybe it would be easier for Drop Loot……?

“Ah, I see.”

“However, it feels that it gives off a bit too much advantage. Sorry, if it’s me, I don’t think I can help.”

“T…There is no such thing!”

Bell waved his hand in front of his chest.

While Eina felt apologetic for not being able to help, Eina decided to ask Bell what <Hestia's Familia> intends to do.

"Bell-kun and Hestia prefer which one?"

"Kami-sama advised me to select <Luck>. Just like this, she clenched her fists and said "This ability is absolutely necessary for you!"."

Because looking at you, it feels that you are always in danger, Eina stared at the boy in front of her and thought.

By now, she did not really want to know how this ability was found.

After being stared at by Eina's gaze, Bell completely did not understand and was suppressed by the other's pressure.

"……Then, Bell-kun, what about you?"

"I…felt that <Hunter> is more cool……No, it should be that I cannot ignore that one……"

"Fufu. Ah, I think I probably understand what you are trying to express. Then?"

"Y…Yes. However, there is also no way to ignore the <Luck> that Kami-sama recommended as well……"

Although Bell's attitude seems to be ambiguous, Eina generally understand what he was thinking.

Based on its effects, <Hunter> is indeed a powerful ability. Adventurers have to experience the scariness of the Dungeon every day. If they have the chance, they should first pick this ability.

On the other hand, <Luck> has never appeared in the past. To say it plainly, it was something that was unknown. However, having a sensitive response to the words, Rare Ability, is only human. If it was something that nobody ever had before, then there was no need to continue mentioning it.

With the premise of excluding <Abnormal Resistance> which is possible to be earned in the future, Bell's heart is probably favoring <Hunter> more.

If he was to speak truthfully, he should want both of them.

Although it was impossible, his feelings could be understood. Eina could not help but reveal a wry smile.

"I have said this before many times, in the end, the one who decides is Bell-kun, so you should not be led by my feelings. So, I can only help give you the consideration method with selection as a premise."

"O…Okay."

After waiting for Bell to sit down, Eina began to talk.

"I believe it is easiest to decide based on your perspective of your goals."

"Goals?"

"Yes, if you want to solidly raid the Dungeon, this ability <Hunter> would indeed be an irreplaceable strength for Bell-kun. If Bell-kun wants to diligently move forward, then I would advise you to select this one."

Eina temporarily stopped speaking and looked into the depths of his crimson pupils.

"However, if Bell-kun's goals are above this, if they are in a distance farther away……When you are walking on this path, perhaps there will be a time when strength is unneeded and you would need <Luck> to pull you forward."

"……"

"So, <Luck> may be the ability that is necessary for you. This is what I believe."

In this moment, silence enveloped the both of them.

After Bell slightly widened his eyes, his gaze fell down onto his own hands.

Seeing the scene of Bell clenching his fists, Eina felt that he seemed to have made a decision.

“No matter which ability you select, there are no mistakes. So Bell-kun can confidently make his own choice. The ability that is chosen will certainly be the one necessary for you right now.”

“……Yes, thank you very much.”

Bell raised his chin and nodded with a fresh expression.

Watching the boy that has already become a Lv.2, yet was still the same as before, constantly being troubled and hesitating as he obtains an answer.

Eina thought happily. It will be better if I take care of him for a while longer.

× × ×

“I’m back, Kami-sama!”

I opened the door of the hidden room inside the church, which acts as our headquarters.

I greeted out loudly and Kami-sama, who was laying on the sofa and reading a book, lifted her face and let out a slight smile.

Using footsteps like hopping to come over here, she welcomed me back home.

“Welcome back, Bell-kun. Then, have you already decided on which ability?”

“Yes, I want to choose <Luck>.”

After listening to Eina-san’s words, I finally decided.

Not to maintain the current status quo, but deciding to continue moving forward.

Although I do not know whether this <Luck> ability is necessary for me, I decided to believe and accept Eina-san’s recommendations based on my intuition.

Looking at me, who found the answer, Kami-sama gently narrowed her eyes and muttered “Is it”.

“Then, without further ado, let’s quickly perform your <Level Up>.”

Facing Kami-sama, who was in front of me and looking over here, I revealed a nervous expression and agreed.

The two of us moved to the fixed position of Kami-sama’s bed and began the <Status> update.

“Bell-kun finally reached Lv.2……Although normally they would say this, but in your situation, I don’t even have time to be deeply moved.”

“I…Is it like this?”

“Ahah. When you first entered my <Familia>, your expression filled with happiness after returning with a victory against a Goblin, it just seems like something that happened yesterday and is fresh in my memories. It is really an incredible feeling……”

Although Kami-sama opened up a conversation with her usual attitude, I could only produce vague responses such as “Er, ahah” or “Y…Yes”.

I will become a Lv. 2.

The creaking sounds that passed through my body from the bed were extremely noisy. My body, which was lying down on the bed, felt like it was floating. Even though I was reluctant, I still knew that I was feeling elated like a fool.

Even though Lv.2 was only just a passing point.

My brain did not work and was completely blank. On the contrary, my body below my neck was dyed red due to the surging flow of heat coming up.

I was neither looking forward or anxious. Only that the sound of my heartbeat kept flowing back and forth……Suddenly, that moment has arrived.

Kami-sama stopped the movements of her hands.

“!”

“……It’s over.”

At the same time Kami-sama came down from my back, I also straightened my upper body.

I maintained a folded knee posture while sitting on the bed and slowly glanced down at my arms.

Under Kami-sama’s gaze, who was next to me, my hands constantly repeated the actions of opening and clenching my fists.

“……It seems that nothing special has changed.”

“Did you think that “Power is surging through……?”……or something similar would happen?”

Looking at Kami-sama, who was laughing after making a performance of power surging through, I felt “How realistic” and perhaps a bit of disappointment while I honestly nodded my head.

After the <Level Up> ended, there was no significant changes in my body.

My body becoming light or the world through my eyes has changed. There was completely none of that feeling. Compared to me a few minutes ago, there was no sense of leveling up to Lv. 2 gushing out.

It wasn’t to the extent that I was disappointed……but there was still a frustrated feeling due to failing to meet with my expectations.

“Because it does not directly change the structure of a body, if you were looking forward to some drastic changes, then I am sorry”

“Ah, no, that type……”

“Fufu, however? <Status> rising up is genuine. Your <Weapon> has already increased to a higher rank. It should be easier if I say you are getting closer to the Gods, right? It is just that Bell-kun still hasn’t recognized it yet, but once you turn on your switch, you should be able to make movements that are incomparable to before.”

With a strange smile, Kami-sama said this. And like usual, she translated and recorded the <Status> into the common language (Koine).

After <Level Up>, the basic abilities and proficiencies are reset to its initial values. It will begin once again from Io. However, the accumulated values in the abilities will not disappear. It seems that it will be act as potential values (Extra Point) and will be reflected in the <Status>. Gods seem to call this as <Hidden Parameters>.

Because I already knew about the fact that my <Status> would turn to its initial values after leveling up, there was no meaning on translating it to a common language (Koine) and letting me see……Did Kami-sama want to let me personally confirm it?

I slightly tilted my head and stood up from the bed. Following, I placed my hand into the spare shirt as my original shirt had become tattered in the fight against the Minotaur.

When my head came out of the shirt, I exchanged glance with Kami-sama, who has finished writing down the <Status>.

“Although I wondered whether or not I should give you a surprise, I should still say it first.”

“?”

A happy Kami-sama smiled and spoke as she passed the report over.

Then after I received the paper, Kami-sama continued to speak “It’s a good news, Bell-kun”. Is there something that happened? ——without letting me inquire, Kami-sama announced the answer.

“A Skill!”

“Huh?”

“Your second—— No! ……Uuu, you see, it is that one. Your long-awaited skill has appeared!”

Between Kami-sama and I, a few seconds of silence appeared.

I slowly listened to Kami-sama’s words. Then at the instant I understood the meaning of those words, I fiercely turned my gaze down to the report. With literally bloodshot eyes, I scanned the notes of Kami-sama.

Then,

Bell Cranel

Lv. 2

Strength: **Io** Endurance: **Io** Dexterity: **Io** Agility: **Io** Magic: **Io** Luck: **I**

<Magic>

[Fire Bolt]

- Speed-cast Magic.

<Skill>

[Hero’s Wish (Argonaut)]

- The right to charge for an active action.

I widened my eyes.

The <Skill> window was filled up.

I panicked and looked in front. Kami-sama's petite face had an elderly smile, there must be a suspicious gaze being thrown from over here. It seems to illustrate the fact that there was no mistake.

I could not help but smile. My face was quickly filled with expressions of joy and I entered my most excited state of today.

There was no need to mention about the muscles on my cheek. Even I, who was looking at the report, knew that my eyes were currently sparkling and glowing. Then, I suddenly noticed one thing.

…… [Hero's Wish]?

Temporarily putting aside the fact that I learned a skill, I escaped from my state of being overjoyed and noticed the name of the skill.

Looking at such an exaggerated name, from the corner of my excited mind, it cooled down at an alarming rate.

(……Wait a minute)

My smile rapidly faded away.

There was no need to mention <Experience Points>. Based on the people who received a <Grace>, their nature and aspirations would impact the <Status> and would be demonstrated through <Skills> and <Magic>.

The name must be the same. Probably, it reflected the psychological behavior of me.

In other words, the instant that the name [Hero's Wish] was carved onto my back (Status)……the fact that I still had a delusion of <Wanting to be a Hero!> at this age was completely revealed……

After my ears instantly turned red, I lifted my face from the report with rigid movements.

In front of me was the figure of Kami-sama giving me a very warm gaze——

“——
U…UWAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH
!?”

Facing Kami-sama, who has a disorganized smile, overlooking at this side, I suddenly cried out.

Throwing the report into the air, I turned around and used both hands to cover my ears as I fell down to a crouching position with my back to Kami-sama.

UWAHH, UWAHHHHHHH ——!

It was revealed! The fact that I still aspire to be a hero in the legends even when I am this old was known by Kami-sama!?

It hurts! It was almost the same degree of discomposure that I have when I am in front of Aizu-san. I could not help but have my shame overflowing through my entire body. The unimaginable burning feeling caused me to be burned severely.

I'm dying, I'm really dying!?

"Bell-kun."

My body could not help but shudder.

Just when I felt a gentle voice scratching my ear, a small and soft hand was already placed onto my shoulders.

Towards the breath right behind me, I held back my tears and timidly turned around.

Kami-sama's smile was overflowing with love.

"——so cute."

"UWAHHHHHH

I, who had fallen straight from heaven to hell, had deep wounds. This may be an injury that will never heal in a lifetime. It may remain like this inside my heart.

With my back to her, I listened to Kami-sama's words as I continued to leak hot tears.

"Shouldn't it be about time to cheer up? Isn't that quite good? You only wanted to be a hero. It is quite uncommon to see such a pure "Child" like you."

"There is no persuasive power when you're saying these words with a grin, Kami-sama!?"

Especially the part when you say "Child", I could feel a strong malicious intent!

My loudly shouted cry echoed in the underground room. My mental balance was already in danger!

With a wry smile, Kami-sama touched my back and said "If it's about hurting you, then I apologize". Once I imagined Kami-sama, with an appearance of a young girl comforting me, it made me feel like a completely useless guy and I became even more depressed.

"Is it already alright?"

"Yes, kind of……"

Shortly after, I finally stood up again. No, truthfully, I had not cheered up yet and there was not even the slightest improvement at all.

Holding back my brain that seems to fall apart the instant I relax it, I picked up the paper that I threw onto the floor and re-read the <Status>.

<Hero's Wish (Argonaut)>……Forgot it, let's leave the name for now. Although I tried to interpret the contents of the important skill……But it was to no avail. There was too little detailed information.

It was the same with <Fire Bolt> at that time. It feels that the Magic and Skill I learned do not seem to explain it well. If that's the case, then I simply do not know what the effects are……

"Kami-sama, do you know what kind of skill this is?"

"Ah, it is hard to easily make a conclusion. It seems that it is the type that is always activated……An active action, in other words, when Bell-kun is conscious of his own actions, maybe it will show a certain effect?"

"A conscious action……?"

"Simply put, it is a spontaneous action such as attacking."

"Under these circumstances, would it also have an effect on counter-attacking?" —— Kami-sama added another sentence.

Ah? It seems like I understand, yet it also seems like I do not understand.

Impossible. With my head, it is impossible to see through the nature of this skill.

"Mmm, then you can only try hard in a real battle to find out. Although this is a quite irresponsible for me to say it."

"It doesn't matter, please don't worry about it. After all, this is my <Skill>……"

In the end, about the Skill, we could only temporarily wait and observe for a conclusion.

While I was still holding futile thoughts, I once again looked at the paper.

Although I was clueless about the skill itself, but about this <Hero's Wish>……<Argonaut>, this word I was quite familiar with.

No, it should be more appropriate to say that it remains in my memories.

<Argonaut>.

That is a myth where a boy with no special skills headed to rescue a princess kidnapped by a Bull Monster.

The protagonist was often deceived, he did not even know that he was deceived. The story advanced in a slightly ridiculous manner, then, the protagonist finally reached where the monster was located. In the end, it seems like he was saved by the princess-sama who was waiting to be rescued?

Even compared to the other hero stories, it was also a hero story that was quite modest.

Probably, it was originally a comedy-like story, but to me, who was reading the picture book when I was young, my lips had bent into a "へ" shape. It was simply uncool……<By dreaming of being a hero, it is considered to be a hero?> ——I used to say this.

My grandfather who claims that he likes this story says "This guy becomes more amazing later on" and laughs. Compared to that, I would pout and say "This story is already finished". ——this memory, even now, I still remember.

Recalling my childhood memories at the most unexpected places made me a bit surprised.

"Sorry, Bell-kun. It is almost time for me to leave."

"Eh? Kami-sama you have work today?"

I had just floated up from my sea of memories, what greeted me was Kami-sama's sudden message of leaving.

I had believed that today was a rest day for work, so I casually asked back.

"Today is the date organized for the once in three months <God's Meeting>."

"<God's Meeting>……C…Could it be?"

"Ah ah, yes. It is a gathering of the Gods that are bored……in order to decide the title of the <Level Up> users.

The title ——after I heard these words, I strained my shoulders.

The title of Aizu-san was <Sword Princess>. This alias was also decided by the God-sama.

In essence, these titles are born through the conversation of Gods during the God's Meeting.

Kami-sama will also go to this type of meeting, this means that……

"Because Bell-kun had become a Lv. 2, I am also permitted to sit in the final seat. I'm afraid that today, your title will be decided."

As expected!

Kami-sama's words confirmed my expectations. Feelings of excitement had already surged through my body who knows how many times.

"WA,WAA,WAAA! In other words, I can also get a title like Aizu-san!?"

"……It seems that you are quite elated."

"That is, of course!"

Thinking of title, it could be said to be the other name of an Adventurer!

Only people who <Level Up> are awarded with it, in other words, my strength was recognized by the Gods! It is undoubtedly an honorable thing!

And, more importantly……!

"No matter which one, the titles that the Gods decided are all so refined, and so cool, isn't it! <Pitched-black Fallen Angel> or something, just by hearing it, it feels so powerful!"

"…….Ahhh, so that's what it is."

I said this out in glee ——Kami-sama's originally surprised expression suddenly changed into the one with a powerless smile.

Specifically, it was a very pitiful smile. Kami-sama seems so distant.

Huh, strange?

Why am I also being overlooked by Kami-sama with an even warmer gaze than earlier……?

"Perhaps. It is still too early for the Lower World people……"

"Eh……W…What is that about……"

"No, nothing at all. One day, Bell-kun will also understand."

Leaving behind profound words, Kami-sama silently began her preparations.

<God's Meeting>, could it be that……it was different than what I imagined?

The God's divine will are directly confronting each other, a meeting conducted in a heavy atmosphere ——that is what I have heard……?

"Then, I'm off."

"O…Okay!"

Kami-sama, who finished her preparations, turned around in front of the door.

That figure seems like a warrior that was resolved for death, I could not help but increase my tone.

In the end, Kami-sama stared at me and with a decided expression, she said,

"Bell-kun, even if I have to drink muddy water, I will win a decent title for you……!"

For you……! Kami-sama left these promised words.

*Bang*, the door of the headquarters was closed.
To Kami-sama, who was extremely motivated and was even showing a figure with the resolve of dying, I could only watch in sweat as she left.

× × ×

God's Meeting, originally it was only a planned gathering of some of the Gods because they were too bored.

When Gods had built up their territory and their factions' strength up to a certain extent, they will forget that they have lived for the hard work and enter a depressed state. When they have leisure time, they suddenly thought of assembling their companions from the same home and discuss trivial matters to pass the time.

Although generally speaking, it was just a simply a joyful conversation, but more importantly, it created an occasion to gather the Gods with unrestrained personalities together at a set date and set location.

Soon, with the increase in Gods participating, the size of the meeting had gradually expanded and following the advancing generations, the purpose of it had also changed. The normal, common conversation had turned into sharing of information and the contents, in which they exchanged opinions, was not only just related to <Familia>, it also involved joint planning with the Guild and the Gods, covering the entire city with <Activities>.

Although it is only in name, but the outside world had speculated that the advisory body, God's Meeting, still had some power and its influence would affect the Adventurers.

The naming of a title was also one part of it. It seems like it is already something common.

"There seems to be many children that <Level Up> this time."

"Ahhh, I heard that there was a large harvest. It really makes one look forward to it."

The venue of the God's Meeting was located at the skyscraper in the center of the city. On the 30th floor.

The alterations carried out were almost completely accounted by this floor's wide space. The walls that were originally there were completely destroyed, thick and long pillars lined up neatly side by side and supported the ceiling. Inside the vast space, there was only a large round table located in the center by itself. Other furniture were completely absent. The outside walls were surrounded by a huge glass wall and it completely covered the 30th floor's space.
Because the ceiling was abnormally high up, it seems like a floating temple in the sky.

"The Gods that showed up here also increased by a lot"

"Hehe, the amount of guys disappearing are also a lot"

Even if it was a rough count, the amount of Gods that sat down around the round table at regular intervals was more than 30. In other words, members worthy of the name High-Class Adventurer——Lv.2 or higher Adventurers, there were only this many <Familia> whose strength was recognized in Orario.

The faces of the attendees were also different. There were male Gods, whose lips were in a ― shape and could not conceal their nervous appearance. There was also a mysterious existence that was wearing a huge elephant mask. Moreover, a silver-haired Goddess was currently resting her eyes with a smile, waiting for the meeting to begin.

It was different than the <God's Banquet> that specified a formal dress code. The Gods attending the <God's Meeting> were wearing various clothing. Among them, Hestia was currently sitting at the seat that was prepared for her and was casually looking at the surrounding Gods.

"You seem unexpectedly calm?"

"Originally, there should be no reason to be nervous, right?"

As Hestia responded, she looked at the red-haired, red-eyed Goddess, Hephaestus sitting next to her.

Letting her red hair, that was shining brightly with a sheen, flow down her back, she was wearing a loose shirt and black long pants. A figure with seemingly male clothes,

plus her original beauty, her whole body exuded a charm that captured the eyes of others regardless of sex.

The Goddess, who was wearing an eye patch, slowly shrugged.

“I thought that you would be more nervous. Just like the usual waning appearance.”

“……If I could change the current situation, no matter how many times, I will still show it to you. However, revealing that kind of appearance would only make the surrounding Gods enjoy it even more, right?”

“Speaking of which, that is true……”

While Hestia felt Hephaestus’s wry smile with her shoulders, several gazes mercilessly stabbed towards her cheek. The Gods, who were the origin of those gazes, made it clear to her that they viewed her as a moth that flew into a flame and revealed an annoyed smile. They did not plan on hiding their intentions.

Even if it were not Hestia, one would be able to easily see through their thoughts. Towards what can be described as a miraculous rise of a weak <Familia>, they plan on using their own methods to welcome it.

“I’ll say this beforehand, don’t expect me to speak. In front of the majority rules system, my opinion is only one vote.”

“I understand.”

Just when Hestia’s voice held some anxiety, a prolonged voice sounded out: “Well, let’s begin ——”.

The noise surrounding the round table suddenly calmed down. The person, who spoke out, shook her red hair and stood up.

“The N Thousandth God’s Meeting officially begins, this time, the MC[1] will be done by me, Loki! I look forward to working with you!”
“YEAH ——!”——Along with the cries of cheers, thunderous applause also came. The scene could be described as a grand occasion that has never been seen before.

Loki, who had her red hair tied back, turned her narrow eyes into a smiling shape while raising her hand.

Hestia stared at her, who was far away from her position, and angrily muttered.

“Why is Loki the MC?”

“It seems like she volunteered herself? I heard that it was because of the <Expedition>, almost all her <Familia> members left, probably she was bored.”

“Humph, what a useless person.”

Hestia could not help but curse her due to the hostile relationship between them.

It was unknown whether she was aware of her resentment, but Loki only used her narrow eyes to glance in Hestia’s direction, as if she was saying “I’ll ignore it right now” and continued to do her duties.

Looking at her, who was different and did not immediately enter in a conflict with her, Hestia revealed a slightly surprised expression.

“Okay, let’s begin neatly. First, let’s exchange intelligence, are there any interesting stories to report ——?”

“HEREHERE! Soma-kun seems to have received the guild’s warning and has his only one interest taken away!”

“WHAT DID YOU SAY ————————————————!”

“Hey, what was Soma’s interest?” “I don’t know.”

“Ah ——, could it be something that Eina did……”

“A story about a lone God (Soma) actually appeared!”

“Then what, what happened next!?”

“It seems like he was holding his knees in the corner of the room, motionless!”

“I WANT TO SEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!”

“I’ll go comfort Soma-kun a bit!”

“Hey.” “Let’s go full of vigor to pour salt on his wounds.”

“Sorry. I apologize for interrupting your topic, but there is a crucial matter ——The Kingdom seems to be making preparations on attacking Orario.”

“That was really sudden.”

“Speaking of which, it is the God of War (Ares)” [2].
“It should be about time that we do something to that idiotic God, right? To be honest, it is actually quite annoying.”

“Why can that Goddess build that kind of faith inside that country?”

“It must be that personality which makes one impossible to hate her. The children seem to like that kind.”

“Because her appearance stands above others. It is able to match the <Goddess of Beauty>. Ah, but I am still devoted to Freya-sama ——!”

“Even though her head is filled with muscle.”

From nonsense content to serious conversation, the topics interweave around the round table slowly, and leisurely changed constantly.

Maintaining a relaxed atmosphere, the Gods would casually let out various topics or go along with other people’s opinion.

Facing the scene without any order, although she had anticipated it a long time ago, Hestia, who was participating in the God’s Meeting for the first time, still revealed a fed up expression.

Although it was not impossible for her to recall, even recalling back her expression was difficult. ——“Okay, quiet down!” —— The MC called out and the surrounding sounds disappeared as if it were all a lie.

“Okay. In conclusion, we should be more concerned about the Kingdom over there. We will also report it to the guild. Anyways, since it is that grandpa Uranus [3] , he probably also has gathered some unique intelligence. The <Familia> that attended may be summoned at that time, so at that time, we will still be looking forward to working with you?”
“Understood.”

Loki presented the intelligence from the meeting in a concise summary, only focusing on the key points. God’s Meeting isn’t only a gathering of Gods of Orario’s main <Familia>, it also served as a task to convey intelligence of high concern.

After this, Loki also continued to calmly push forward the meeting. After confirming that majority of topics have been reported……She clapped her hands and lifted the corner of her mouth.

“Then, let’s begin the next part. Beginning the naming process.”

Tension filled the air.

With Loki’s speech as the lead, the numerous Gods, who have had their mouths closed so far, changed their expressions. Hestia was also one of the people who held back and did not say anything.

The other Gods were filled with wicked smiles.

The Gods that were part of the regular group for God’s Meeting, “It’s time to watch a good show” let out evil smiles.

This was the beginning of a tragedy.

“The information has been passed over already, right ——? Then let’s begin, the leadoff is from……Set’s Familia [4], the Adventurer Seti-chin!”
“P…Please, Please be sure to show some mercy……!?”

“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “REJECTED!” ” ” ” ” ” ” ” ”

“NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!”

The emotional difference of Gods and the Lower World people could be easily seen as the Gods enjoy the Lower World's culture, the two groups are actually extremely similar. Because they were often referred to as a transcended existence, they had feelings that surpass human wisdom ——so discord would not happen. They were not that much different than children.

But,

When limited to their naming sense, it was not the case.

Whether it was because the Gods were too weird, or the children were too ignorant.

Was it because the Gods were innovative or was it because the children could not catch up to the times.

Although the authenticity is inconclusive, let's not mention it temporarily. Behind the shining eyes of the children, the <Hateful Name> that made Gods struggle with do exist.

"——it's decided. The Adventurer Seti Seruti's title is <Dawn of the Holy Dragon Knight (Burning Fighting Fighter) [5] >"
"IT HURTTTSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS!?"

Then, mass producing these <Hateful Names> is the current God's Meeting.

In order to seek the urge to laugh, the Gods, who have an evil personality, continuously issued out these aliases that make the children feel in awe.

The children that was awarded the title and was proud of it, and the crazy Gods, once they mention those names, they would still be able to roll on the floor laughing. Among 8 or 9 out of 10, it will be handed down to the future generations as one of the myths.

"They're all crazy……"

"I understand your feelings……"

Hestia, who was muttering, Hephaestus continued to speak: “At first, I was also like that”. Her red-colored left eyes also looked to the distance.

God’s Meeting, correctly speaking, it is the process of naming an alias. Towards the new God entrants, it was basically very cruel.

The Gods that led a higher up <Familia> seemed to regard the God’s Meeting’s ‘Senpai’ identity as one of the best things and they took the opportunity to bully the newcomers. The Gods that screamed and successively collapsed, and the Gods that giggled and issued out a laugh. Looking at the two extreme camps, Hestia could only turn her face away.

“Oh, next one. Takemakikazuchi’s Familia……Ohhhh, this child is quite cute. Uhhh ——, if she was born in the far east, then her name should be at the back……It is Mikoto Yamato-chan.”

The information not only had the name and the person’s information, the time when they were recorded as an Adventurer and a realistic painting portrait was also attached to it. The surrounding Gods also opened up the parchment and let out an “Oh?” sigh.

“This person’s……Level is really high.”

“As expected, black hair is a good thing ——“

“Yes, this child is indeed a bit……”

“Speaking of which, if we were to do such a terrible thing to such a pure girl……It really makes one boil up, ah no, my conscience will feel painful.

“R…Really!?”

In the God’s Meeting, there were also several ways to avoid being given a malicious alias.

Although at the beginning of the meeting, offering a tribute to the people who have the power is one way, because this normally would require a huge amount of money,

for a developing <Familia> with financial difficulties, it could be said to be very difficult.

Overall, many of the situation is just like what is happening in the current God's Meeting. The situation of the member being liked by numerous Gods. In comparison, the chances of females being noticed were relatively higher.

From the gap of the clouds that leaked out a glimmer of light, it made the Male God with his hair forming horns, Takemikazuchi hurriedly stood up from his seat.

"However, Takemikazuchi, you are no good."

"This natural pretty face……"

"Whether it is the Goddess or children, all of them are captivated by you……"

"You damn Lolicon!"

"What are you saying, you guys!"

"Mikoto-chan must also……"

"Ahhh, since I cannot convey these thoughts with words, why don't I personally……Fuhehe."

"You guys……!?"

There is no existence that is as fickle as the Gods in the world.

Takemikazuchi, who felt empty joy, was angry to the extent where he was gritting his teeth.

"Okay! The one who will guide Mikoto-chan's future is me! <Future Galaxy (Fortune Galaxy)>!"

"Mikoto-chan, you are a good girl, but unfortunately, you are together with that God. <Scattered Saint (Last Heroine)>!"

“Hey! Stop! Stop quickly! Mikoto, she, Mikoto is someone that I nurtured through many hardships!?”

“<Angel>”

“ “ “ “ “THAT’S IT!” ” ” ” ”

“Please spare me.”

Since the beginning, the God’s Meeting has entered the noisiest situation.

Although Hestia and Hephaestus also made a few comments, but it was completely looked down upon.

“If that’s the case, Mikoto-chan’s title is decided to be……<Absolute ※Shadow>.”

“Agreed.”

“UWAHHHH…UWAHHH

“Ehehe. It is the same when we were at Heaven, boredom is a poison that can kill us. I could not hold back from coming over here, Ishtar.”

As long as the Gods attended once, then they will maintain the right to attend in the future.

Although if there are no members in their <Familia> that <Level Up>, there was no reason to specifically attend. However, Gods that want to kill time will still actively get involved. The best examples are the Gods that are scrambling and trying to decide the aliases.

Towards the <Goddess of Beauty> Ishtar, whose every word was filled with a mocking tone, the same Goddess of Beauty, Freya responded calmly with a smile.

“Heh —, so that’s it. Speaking of being free, isn’t your Familia’s children also rather free. They probably remained in the Middle Floors and fought against the Minotaurs day and night? Is this what they called the children is the same as their God?”

“Fufu, maybe that is the case.”

“Ahah, speaking of which, I heard that a Minotaur was brought into the Upper Floors……Could it be something that your Familia’s children did, Freya? If that’s the case, who knows what the guild would say?”

“Please listen to what this side has to say first, Ishtar. When my Familia’s dependent (child) was playing with a Minotaur, it seems like he was suddenly attacked by a group of masked Amazons. The Minotaur took advantage of the chaos and ran away……Really, don’t you think that it was rude? I really want to see what their Main God’s (Parent) appearance looks like……”

“……!”

Ishtar, with the provocative clothes that wrapped around the brown skin, had her expression violently twisted. On the other hand, Freya chuckled and gave a slight smile as if she was saying that the topic was already over and closed her eyes.

Right now, the truth about the matter that had caused distress to Adventurers on the streets had already vanished into the darkness. At least, this is what the Gods that are at the scene believe.

Towards the debate of the Goddess of Beauty that were extremely beautiful, the surrounding Gods could only smile while watching it.

(Speaking of Amazon, could it be that Ishtar went to provoke Freya again?)

(Who knows? Nnn, anyways, it isn't strange. Ishtar viewing Freya as hostile isn't just a thing that happened one or two days ago.)

(Looks like Freya easily dealt with it……It is normal for them to attempt to determine who is more beautiful, but from the two of them, it feels rather dangerous.)

(Then you go talk with Ishtar.)

Hestia, who was whispering softly with Hephaestus, directed her gaze towards Freya.

Although just by involving Bell with the matter of a Minotaur, to Hestia, it was something she could not ignore……However, right now, since Hestia could not accept Freya or Ishtar's side speech, she could not continue to inquire about it.

Although the Goddess that she was concerned about revealed a smile, she decided to not speculate.

"Okay okay, let's end this farce. Let's get back on topic. The next Adventurer is ……Nfufu, it is my own Familia's Aizu!"

"<The Sword Princess> came —!"

"The princess is still as beautiful as ever."

"However, she is already Lv.6 ……"

Although the naming process has been derailed in the middle, Aizu Wallenstein's name's appearance had brought it back to the topic.

The Gods noisily flipped over the data, the portrait depicted on the parchment greeted their eyes. In the picture, a girl with an expression like an exquisite doll was facing forward.

The Lower World people alias still had room for change at a <Level Up>. Even though they may take another strange name, but if they prepared several countermeasures before the next God's Meeting, it is possible to wash away a bad name.

"If it's Aizu-chan, there is no need to specifically change it, right?"

"That's true."

"If we want to change it, what about <Sword Saint>?"

"Eh~~?"

"That does not seem to match with Aizu-tan's image."

"Mmmm, the final candidates have been determined, <God's Bride>."

" " " " " " " " THAT'S RIGHT!" " " " " " " "

"I'LL KILL YOU."

" " " " " " " I'M EXTREMELY SORRY!!" " " " " " "

Another method of avoiding the disgraceful alias was to expand your <Familia>'s force.

Simply put, if the other people think that "It is bad if we have something to do with this Familia", then it is fine. After knowing that there will be retaliation waiting for him, a God that would dare do it does not exist.

Loki is able to shoot out murderous gazes and caused all the Gods that had become carried away to drop their heads onto the round table and bow.

“Really, if you are planning to find trouble, you should still look at the target. Mmm, forget it, let’s continue……Ah, the next one is the last.”

Hestia took a large breath and held it in.

The remaining data was only one. Right before the God’s Meeting, this Adventurer had finally succeeded in passing through the last barrier, and the relevant information would only record the minimal data.

Up to a while earlier, he was still unknown, an Adventurer affiliated to <Hestia’s Familia>.

Bell.

“He really became a Lv. 2, your Familia’s child……”

Looking at the seal that was placed onto the parchment as an evidence that confirmed a <Level Up>, Hephaestus narrowed her eyes.

Not because her friend whispered to her, she pricked her ears. Hestia glanced around the surrounding.

There were many smiles in the surrounding. The kind of evil and bad smiles as if they were waiting for the dessert at the end of a luxurious feast.

This is the first and also the last critical moment ——Hestia said to herself.

Although Hestia had boasted in front of Bell, she did not prepare any great countermeasures. Having said that, she was still encouraging herself with “Here let us rely on the power of our love and courage……!” ——After this.

Loki quietly stood up from her seat.

“……Loki?”

“Before we decide on the alias, there is something I wanted to ask you, shorty.”

Completely ignoring the surrounding reactions, she exuded a thorny atmosphere while she slightly opened her eyes.

“Only using one and a half month time and letting our <Grace> to evolve, how did this happen?”

*BANG*
Her palm slammed upon the information of Bell that was placed on top of the table, Loki used her sharp eyes to glare at Hestia, who widened her eyes.

“Even if it is my Familia’s Aizu, to reach her first <Level Up>, she also spent a year, she spent a whole year, you know? But, this boy only took one month? Are you treating me as a fool?”

8 years ago.

At that time, a girl that was only eight years achieved Lv.2 with an abnormal speed, this was still fresh inside one’s memory. And this was a human, whose race was far inferior to the other races in terms of physical ability or wisdom.

The achievement of reaching Lv.2 as fast as the fastest record had once caused a large commotion to Orario, the world.

“Our <Grace> is not such a thing. If it only needs one month for our children’s stats to grow up, then there is no need for us to care about it. It is precisely because it is impossible, so that is why we would work so hard.”

<God’s Grace> is definitely not an impromptu power, Loki said.

<Status> is only just a catalyst. It allows the person’s possibilities that have not appeared yet in their life to be excavated out now, and turning it into an ability that the people could clearly grasp.

Ability, Skill, Magic. These abilities are all buried insider that person’s body as a sharp blade known as <Quality>. And this is built up from the various accumulated history ——<Experience Points>’s effects. It will escape from its original form and evolve or perhaps become decadent and degenerate. The seeds that were buried in the soil will bloom into different flowers based on the different environment.

Thus, <Status> is only a catalyst.

<God's Grace> is not an almighty power that is applied externally, if it was to be said out without any misunderstanding, it is ultimately a key to realize themselves.

"Hey, shorty, quickly explain it to me."

"……"

Looking at Loki, who was letting out aggressive verbal threats, inside Hestia's heart, it began to rain sweat.

This is bad, this is very bad.

The instant the existence of Bell's skill <Single-Minded Pursuit> was revealed in public, that instant will turn it into a festival ——Speaking of which, it was because she was afraid of this kind of thing, so that is why she kept it a secret from Bell, who had the <Single-Minded Pursuit> engraved onto his back ——. In addition to the truth about establishing the fastest record, right now, all the Gods would instantly rush over to Bell's side.

Should she carry out an obligation of maintaining secrecy? But if she tells them this, it is the same as saying that there is something hidden on Bell's body. If she wanted Loki to accept it, thinking up a clever excuse was the best strategy, but it is impossible to immediately think of one.

Being thrown into the ant's hell [8] and desperately attempt to escape it, this image floated up into Hestia's mind.
"You can't say it right? Could it be that you used your God's Power?"

"I…I won't do such a thing!"

"If that's the case, then say it. If you do not do anything wrong, then saying it won't be a problem."

"Uuuuu……"

Although Hestia hurriedly refuted that she used the forbidden “God’s Power”……Towards the accusation of performing a <Transformation> on Bell, but she was being led step by step by a clever speech and was almost urged to say the answer.

Even Hephaestus, who was beside her, seemed to find it difficult to interject and revealed a bitter expression.

Right now, all the gazes surrounding the round table gathered onto Hestia. It seems very interesting ——as if they were saying this, all the Gods had the attitude of listening to every single word without missing one. In the end, it made Hestia’s rain of sweat reach its peak speed.

Is it over? ——just when Hestia was prepared to give up, the next moment.

“Ara, isn’t it fine.”

A beautiful voice echoed.

“……Eh?”

“Ahh?”

The gazes that were thrown at Hestia began to move away and gathered at the owner of the voice.

Sitting deep into the chair, Freya, motionlessly, continued to speak as if nothing had happened.

“Since Hestia already say that she did not do any improper actions, there is no need to force her to speak, right? We do not interfere with the internal affairs of a <Familia> and inquiring about a member’s Status is also forbidden.”

Freya brushed her silver hair and gently lifted it behind her ear.

As if she did not have excessive concern, she seemed to speak the objective facts out. Freya interrupted Loki’s words.

“…….It was only a month and a bit? Do you not understand what these numbers mean, you perverted Goddess.”

“Fufu, why do you insist to this extent, Loki? From what I see, it is your attitude that seems more incredible……Could it be, you are jealous? Because the child that you like had her record surpassed by Hestia’s child?”

“How is it possible?”

Towards Loki, who spat out these words, Freya, with an unchanging smile, said “Really?”

Loki, who was scowling, was about to speak, but she stopped a moment before it occurred. It seems like the argument between her and Hestia had reoccurred, the scene of her own speech easily guided to a dead end. This was what Loki had read from Freya’s smile.

*Tch*, Loki used a suspicious expression to gaze at the female Goddess that was her former acquaintance.
“Indeed the numbers itself will make one doubt their ears……However, didn’t this child miraculously overturn the difference in Lv., and defeat that Minotaur?”

“……”

“If we use a little far-fetched reasoning, it should be fine. Under the situation where the enemy was a Minotaur that was filled with predestined relationship, the amount of <Experience Points> that child will obtain should have a special meaning……Thus, it should be possible for a <Level Up>……This is what I think?”

The entire God’s Meeting was surprised by every word that Freya said.

Inside the information of <Bell Cranel> that the Gods hold, what was worth noting in the past was that he had met with a Minotaur twice, and was even defeated in one of the times. The surrounding Gods continued to agree with the reasoning of Freya and even Loki bent her lips into a “へ” shape.

It has already been a few thousand years since the Gods had bestowed <Grace> to the Lower World people.

They cannot deny ——or perhaps they themselves do not know the possibilities that were currently sleeping somewhere. Even if this time a growth phenomenon that was beyond the usual course occurs, isn't it nothing to worry about? ——Freya expressed this point in a roundabout manner.

Following this, the meeting suddenly entered a temporarily blank state.

Even though they were full of interest, at the very least, there was no need to forcibly reveal the state of Bell Cranel —— voices of following the rules between factions emerged. Shortly after, aside from a group of Gods, this had become the majority opinion.

Freya quietly smiled and with an elegant expression, she threw a gaze towards Hestia.

Towards the quietly sent silver gaze, Hestia, who was still stunned and could not keep up with the current situation, could only blink nonstop.

Soon, Freya stood up from her prepared seat.

"Huh, Freya-sama, are you leaving?"

"Ehehe. I suddenly have something urgent, please allow me to leave first."

"Since it is a rare opportunity, why not discuss about the Loli Goddess's dependent's alias? It is already the last of the last."

"Fufu, although I am sorry, but there really is no way."

"However, also……"

Freya maintained her standing posture and picked up the data. She looked at Bell's portrait and then said,

"If you want to make a name, then give him a cute name, okay?"

" " " " " " " " " OK ——!!" " " " " " " " "

Looking at the Goddess of Beauty's best smile that was exposed today, the male Gods all let out a fresh smile and had a unified opinion. The female Goddess only sent them eyes that seemed to be looking at trash.

Freya finally revealed a smile again, and turned her back towards the round table.

"Okay, then become slightly serious when deciding the alias."

"Of course."

"However, this person……There is no special features."

"Why not say that the person who can see through him is very amazing." "Rumors or evaluations are basically not written above."

The Gods suddenly became serious and actively discussed about Bell's alias.

Facing the completely different atmosphere of the God's Meeting, Hestia suddenly fell silent. Then, she turned her head to look at Hephaestus, who was beside her. Using her gaze to ask her: What on earth is this?

After she revealed an impatient expression, it seems to be saying "Who knows?" and shrugged her shoulders.

"Why not say that the intelligence is too little. There is basically not enough to make a reference. There should be a limit on how lazy the guild can be."

"When he <Level Up>, the God's Meeting seemed to be just around the corner. After all, he was sitting at the last train, there is no way helping it."

"Appearance, features……White hair coupled with red eyes……Rabbit……Why not call him Usagi Kichi?"

"No good. that is already used. It seems like a Blacksmith called Welf something already gave this name to his own forged armor."

"He actually went ahead of a God……!!"

“That person called Welf something……Who on earth is he?”

“Ah —, Ganesha-sama, do you have any opinions —?”

“……I am…Ganesha!”

“Yes yes, Ganesha Ganesha.”

“Once we plan to think of a serious alias, there is no inspiration emerging —“

With the male Gods as the center, the discussion of this was not it and that was not it continued.

Anyways, it seems like she avoided the crisis. Hestia scratched her head and thought. Just at this moment.

A black shadow fell on top of her.

“……Loki?”

“……”

Standing beside her was Loki. She left her own seat and stared directly at Hestia.

With a calm face, her whole body exuded an atmosphere of having a poor mood. Loki muttered,

“……Be careful, shorty.”

“Eh?”

“I am telling you to keep your eyes sharp. Although I feel uncomfortable in giving advice to shorty……but letting that idiot act as she pleases, it is more unbearable to the current me.”

She was played, Loki lifted her head and said with a disgusted expression.

Following her gaze, Hestia saw Freya's silver hair that was swaying and was about to leave the room.

"W…Wait a minute. Telling me to be careful, what are you saying?"

She was unable to grasp the essentials of what the other was saying and reflexively asked. Loki frowned.

After glaring at Hestia, as if she was saying "Do you still not understand?", Loki moved her nose close to her nose.

"Idiot, be careful. That goddess protected your Familia's child, you know?"

"……?"

Her thoughts stopped for a moment, Hestia could only look at the line of sight projected in front of her and trembled.

Loki raised her face and as if she was genuinely feeling admiration and humph-ed.

"Ha, do you still not understand? What a lucky fellow……Forget it, since this has no relationship with me."

Stupid ——Muttering this, Loki returned to her seat.

Under Hephaestus's gaze that saw the whole event from start to finish, Hestia watched Loki's figure and suddenly turn her gaze back towards the door that Freya used to leave.

She playback the words that Loki had said.

Then suddenly, she remembered the meaningful smile that the Goddess of Beauty had thrown to her.

……Freya protected? ……That child?

Just when this possibility was about to bloom from inside Hestia's heart.

As if it was to interrupt her thoughts, the surrounding round table roared out.

“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ Then it’s decided to be this one —!!” ” ” ” ” ” ”

× × ×

It was not to the extent that it was strange.

However, inside the spacious interior of the guild’s headquarters, it was indeed shrouded in some kind of tension.

(Isn’t every body’s murderous intent extremely heavy?)

(I feel that it isn’t like this……)

Facing Misha, who leaned her mouth over near her own pointed ears, Eina quietly responded.

Their location was not the usual hall that they work at, but the second service room lined with a low number of office desks.

The spacious interior was completely different than usual. A heavy silent atmosphere was floating around them.

“Tulle, are you listening?”

“Ah……S…Sorry, team leader.”

After being called out by the voice in front of her, Eina hurriedly recovered herself. Misha, who was beside her, also straightened her posture.

In front of them, a male beast man was sitting on a chair. He used a calm gaze to scan the document that Eina had edited he held in one hand.

“I’ll say it again, this thing……is basically telling the Lv.1 Adventurers to go die.”

“Yes……”

“Although it made you spend a great deal of effort, but based on the guild’s stance, we cannot publicize this kind of thing……Adventurer Bell Cranel’s growth model should first be hidden.”

That is also true——She thought of this inside her heart, Eina seemed to be standing there as if she was extremely sorry.

——Exploring the dungeon by himself (Solo Play), and with <Killer Ants> as the focus, he continuously hunted the Monsters, then finally, he fought a <Minotaur> by himself and directly defeated it.

The secret of Bell reaching Lv. 2 was probably just like this.

If they use this kind of activity record without changing it and branded it as a method of <Level Up> in a short period, if they publicize it to the Adventurers, at that time, there will probably a large amount of disapproval attacks on the guild.

They will say: “Are you looking down on us?” or something similar.

“……Let’s first hide the past, I will convince the higher ups.”

“I am extremely sorry……”

The supervisor with a slim face glanced at the report that Eina made again, then he placed it into his own desk. Probably this report will never appear in front of anyone again.

While he used his hand to scratch his head, which had furry beast man ears growing out, he revealed a speechless expression.

“Tulle, there is another thing.”

“May I ask what it is?”

“Don’t do such a reckless action again.”

“……Okay, I will pay attention in the future.”

In the end, he hoped that Eina would be more careful about the matter in the morning——she called out Bell's personal information out loud. Eina bowed her head deeply. For him to show some mercy, Eina felt gratitude towards her considerate superior and sighed at herself.

Shortly after, Eina and the other's superior turned his head away "Next is Flott" and called Misha.

"H…Here."

"……The information provided to God's Meeting was simply terrible, especially the last part of Bell Cranel."

"T…Team leader~, that was an <Level Up> application that was only accepted right before the God's Meeting, there is basically no time to deal with it~!? I had also worked hard in this kind of battlefield, please don't request that much~!"

"I understand what you are trying to say……but the entire thing is still too messy. If the Gods come here to complain, then Flott, you will deal with them by yourself. Even if it's me, I cannot help you."

"Uuuu~~Eina~~" Eina sighed again when Misha cried and held her shoulder. Their superior turned their back towards them and after informing them "You guys can go", they left the place.

They did not immediately head back towards the main hall, but towards the pantry set up in the corner of the room.

Using the Magic Stone device, which they were already familiar with its operation, two portions of steaming red tea was quickly made.

"Haa, it really caused me a lot of trouble, Eina's otouto-kun……"[9]
"What otouto……However, if it's Misha, then you should already know that it was not all Bell's fault?"

"I can't hear it, I can't hear anything at all ——"

Looking at the petite back of her human friend, Eina could only make a stunned expression.

The peach-colored hair was shaking, her back was also currently shrinking back in order to sip the tea.

After knowing each other from the same school district, this friend still has not changed. Eina could not help but make a wry smile.

“Speaking of which, as expected, the team leader cannot calm down? It seems that he was extremely anxious.”

“Ah, mmm, it was different than usual……”

Looking from the corner of the room, you could not feel any sense of calmness from the people inside the room.

Many employees were walking back and forth at the same location, the people who were sitting on the chair would also frequently confirm the time. The usual sound of the quill writing had completely disappeared.

In fact, Eina and the others had already noticed the culprit that caused this atmosphere.

“It is already past 3 pm……The God’s Meeting should already be over, right?”

“Probably, the report with the results should have already been sent over……”

After the God’s Meeting is over, the scene in front of their eyes right now was something described as common.

At this point, what the employees were most concerned about was the aliases of the Adventurers. The Gods would confer an alias, which is something that the Lower World people would tremble with respect at. No matter who, they will still treat the results of the God’s Meeting as their own matter.

Looks like the superiors are also this anxious ——this was what Eina and Misha thought as they saw a similar scene at the hall.

“Eina is also very curious? What kind of alias will appear this time?”

“I……Yes, that’s right, if it’s this time, I am slightly more concerned about it.”

“As expected? Me too. Because it’s the Adventurer I was in charge of <Level Up> I am also looking forward to it!”

Just when the two of them began to chat, suddenly, without any warning, a banging sound appeared.

The sudden sound of the door opening made everybody turn their head over to look.

In front of the door, an employee who was holding a roll of files breathlessly was standing there.

“It came, the results of the God’s Meeting was sent over!”

“Waited for a long time!”

“Hey! Let me see quickly!”

Their actions could be described as god-speed.

Throwing away their work to the side, they scrambled to the entrance of the door. The group of people quickly bundled up together and the numerous parchments that recorded the title was passed through by the various hands.

Quickly, sounds of sighs echoed out.

“Look at this quickly, this alias.”

“Ooooo, amazing……”

“As expected from the Gods.”

“Ahhh, we are totally no match for them.”

“As expected, the Gods are different than us. It is actually <Brilliant Tail Beautiful Hands [10]>……My goose bumps are acting up.”
“It makes one’s hair stand up on its end.”

“The Gods could actually easily come up with this kind of title. They are truly an existence worthy of our respect.”

With the male employees as the focus, the guild headquarters began to bustle up.

Is there some sort of common language that exists? They really can be described as having the same likes and dislikes. Eina and the other’s superiors were also naturally mixed in the crowd and were passionately discussing about it. She did not know when the continuous shriek came from the female camp of another department appeared.

Suddenly hearing the burst of sound, Misha, who was beside her, suddenly shook her shoulder.

“I was actually a bit slow……Hurry, Eina!”

“Ah, yes.”

Eina followed Misha and ran out. After squeezing through the human walls, in order to browse the list of aliases, she worked together with Misha and it entered her eyes. At the same time, Eina’s mind depicted Bell’s face.

(N~nn, I hope that it would not be a hardcore name……)

What should she do if he was given a name like <Bloody Adventurer (Bloody Guy)> ——Eina imagined it —— The next time she meets with Bell, the boy will certainly be elated, and she could only patiently sweat as she carefully decided the words.

Although this was not something that was unexpected, Eina felt that style of alias was somewhat unsuitable for Bell. At the same time she revealed a wry smile, she hoped to see a slightly normal name ——Eina prayed inside her heart for this tiny wish.

“Eina, I got it —! I’ll give it to you, look quickly~!”

Eina received the list from Misha's waving hand.

This was a parchment that listed out neatly the Adventurers and their aliases. Every piece, Eina glanced down from top to the bottom and exchanged it with the next one as she finished looking over it.

Then, at the very final page, Eina noticed the target's name.

"——Ahaha."

"Eh, is it Bell-kun's?"

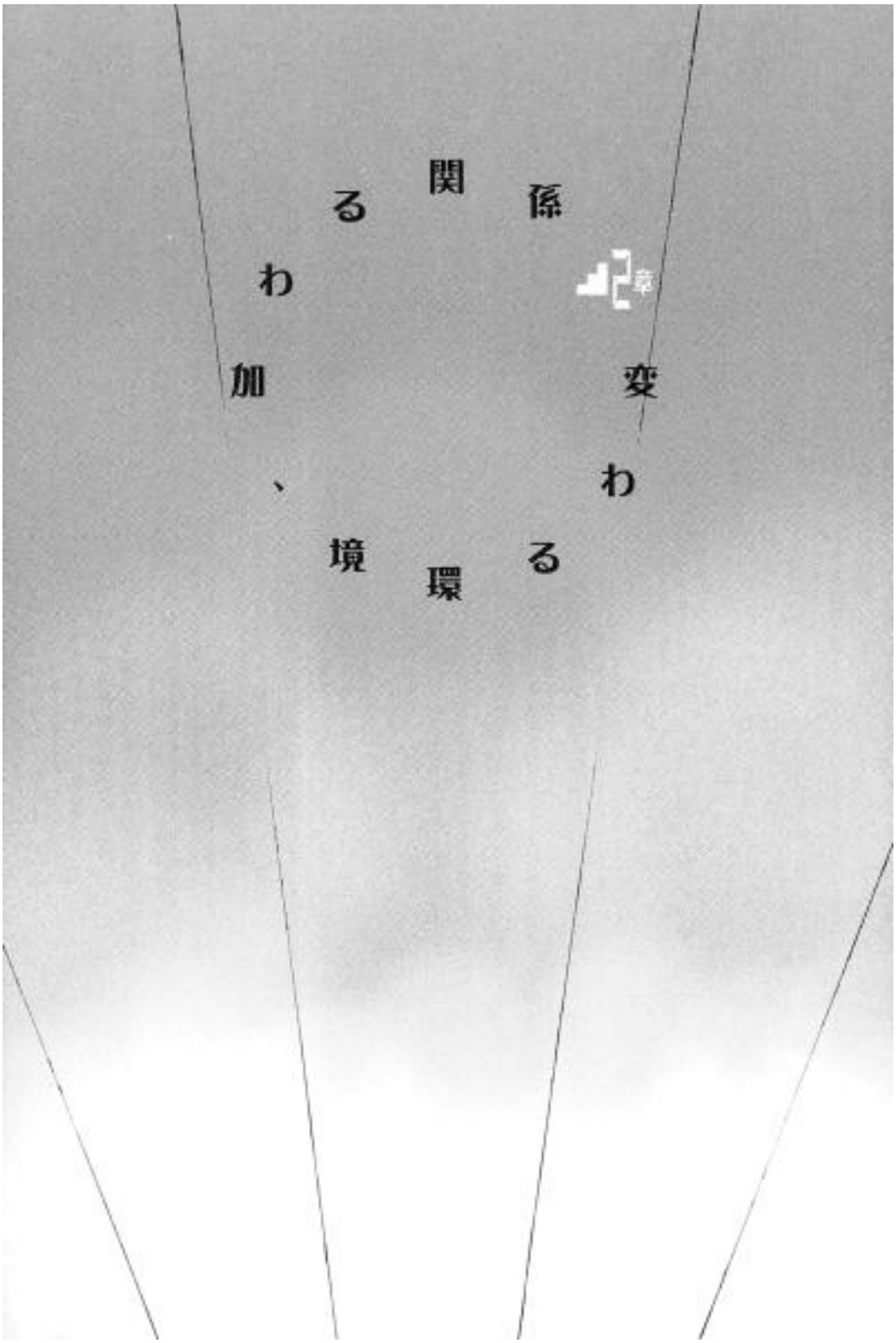
Eina could not help but leak out sounds of laughter.

She relaxed her cheeks and her tiny lips drew a gentle smile.

As Misha looked over her shoulder to view it, Eina read out the alias.

"He is called <Little Rookie>."

## Chapter 2
# Changing Environment, Additional Relationship



"……"

I looked at the white-colored ceiling in a trance.

Inside the hidden room under the church that nobody else was in, I was laying on the sofa by myself.

There was nothing that I was planning to do. I was just laying down idly in order to pass the time. Tick Tock, Tick Tock, the sound of the second hand moving quietly told the passing of time.

The showdown with the Minotaur had already been three days ago.

Just like having no purpose, I was already somewhat accustomed to the lifestyle of doing nothing.

After that duel, I had slept in the treatment room of Babel for two entire days.

The aftereffects of the duel……Because I had excessively overused my physical and mental strength, my mind and body could not keep up with the rhythm and completely could not bear it. As if I were a dead man, I was always sleeping like mud. Even right now, I could still clearly remember the peaceful expressions of Kami-sama and Lili that entered my vision when I was half-conscious.

For half a day, I was severely scolded by Kami-sama and Lili. Then, I rested again for the remainder of the day——and maintained my current state right now.

"Level 2……"

I leveled to Lv.2.

I was extremely happy. This was absolutely not a lie.

When I heard of the <Level Up>, I was so excited that I could not even close my mouth. It was the proof that I had become closer to my dream, causing the heat from my back to remain.

……However, the feeling of defeating the Monster known as Minotaur still did not disappear.

From the beginning to the end, I was immersed in the fiery aftertaste. It was not that I had no strength, it was just like as if I was floating on top of the surface of spring water and could only blindly entrust myself to that incredulous feeling.

If I said it was a sense of accomplishment, it was a bit too rough. If I said it was a sense of liberation, it also seems a bit incorrect. If I said it was a sense of loss……That should not be wrong.

Although I am unable to use words to convey it properly, I was certain that the Minotaur's existence was extremely important inside my heart.

I even felt that the meaning of the <Level Up> did not beat the meaning of defeating the Minotaur.

"……"

I groped around my waist and grabbed onto the thing that I wanted. Then I brought it in front of my eyes.

It was sharp. Damaged and had cracks. Right now, the horn has become a slightly long dagger shape.

The Drop Loot <Minotaur's Horn>"

The Minotaur's body had already completely turned into ashes. It only left this and <Magic Stone>. Although I had already taken the <Magic Stone> and exchanged it for cash, I was still left with this thing.

Under the light from the Magic Stone Lamp, I used my fingernail to gently scratch the surface of the horn.

White powder constantly fell down——I do not know whether it was originally like this or whether it was because of the effects of my Magic, the crimson core inside of it was exposed.

An extremely tough horn.

The weapon the Minotaur used to attack me even in its last moments.

I could still hear it inside my ears. The roars of the ferocious bull that was constantly echoing inside the depths of my head was gradually fading away.

"……Ah."

I stood up and felt that my body was floating.

Let's change the mood now. I took one final glance at the red color horn and powerfully nodded my head. The time to be immersed in sentimental feelings should be over.

It is time to act. I lifted my head and looked at the clock.

Truthfully, today I was going to participate in a party. The location is the bar that I often visit, <Mistress of Abundance>.

I was ashamed to say that the party itself was organized to celebrate my <Level Up>……

This morning, when I went to hand the basket back to Seal-san, I told her in passing the matter of my <Level Up>. In the end, I do not know how it became a celebration that was hosted in the <Mistress of Abundance>.

Although not willing to lose an opportunity to earn money was indeed their style, they really do not need to consider me that much……It always feel that I was a bit sorry about it.

(If it is going to be organized, I also hope that Kami-sama could come……)

It does not seem like Kami-sama could make it. Rather, was it because the Gods themselves have also organized a feast or perhaps comforting banquet of some sort, anyways, it seems like a chance for the Gods to have some sort of exchange.

When she just came back, Kami-sama also took the opportunity to tell me the title of <Little Rookie>.

<Little Rookie>……Ah, Kami-sama seemed to be very happy and said as she hugged me “Not bad, Bell-kun. It is flawless!”……Ara ara, since Kami-sama was happy, then I will not be dissatisfied, I will not be dissatisfied, I will not be……dissatisfied.

Just when I was thinking of random thoughts, the time that the clock displayed was already 6. It was almost time, it’s time to go.

I walked out of the hidden room underground, walked up the stairs, and escaped from the half-ruined church.

When I came out to the outside, the western skies have already been dyed dark red. Night was about to come.

Just when I walked out of the complicated alley, the vibrant Main Street greeted me.

“——Foundddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddd!!”

“Eh?”

Just when I was about to enter the flow of people in front of my eyes.

A sudden cry hit me.

W…What? There was no time to look left or right. Instantly, I was surrounded by numerous Gods.

Huh, Gods……!?

“Why can’t we find the Loli Goddess’s home, it was really tiring for us……”

“Putting a surveillance nearby seems to have some value……”

“Ambush is the basics of a Hunt.”

“You finally came out, usagi-chan ☆”

——a cold chill hit me.

Facing the numerous pairs of eyes that surrounded me, there should be no reason that I should feel fear. The last time I blinked when they rushed towards me had even caused the blood to drain from my face.

I did not understand the situation that this was.

Each of them muttered unintelligible vocabulary had caused me to increasingly become more confused.

“The early bird gets the worm! Bell-kun, do you want to join my <Familia>!? If you join right now, all the members of the <Familia> will passionately welcome you!”

“Ah, you bastard!? You’re trying too hard, restrain yourself a bit! So that’s why the weak <Familia>……”

“All of you should just back off! Bell Cranel, come over here! You stole away my heart! Fufu, what a sinful usagi-chan!”

“What do you plan on making that child wear!”

Looking at the bizarre expressions of the approaching Gods, I could not help but suck down a mouthful of cold air.

……P…Persuasion of <Familia>? Why did it come now?

When I just came to the city, no matter which faction I went to, they all just gave me the cold shoulder……

“T…That, I already joined Kami-sama……Hestia-sama’s <Familia>……!?”

“In front of love, the existences of others are not important. Isn’t that correct?”

“To the Loli Goddess, it is a bit of a waste!”

T…They completely did not listen to my words.

“Tell the truth, is the true face of your growth speed due to your physique? Or perhaps your skill? Or did you cheat?”

“Rare skill, rare skill? Hey, that’s right isn’t it? As expected, it’s a rare skill!?”

“I am slightly curious about this child’s back.”

“If it is possible, then could you take off your clothes? It is fine if it is just the upper body, I will give you lots of money, okay? ……Fumu.”

“Rather, we could directly strip it off?”

“Forcing others is also another taste.”

“——Fuhehe.”

——I escaped the scene at my max speed.

× × ×

“Ah, you’ve finally came nya!”

“Ahaha, you actually dared to come late, Adventurer-kun.”

When I reached the <Mistress of Abundance>, the moon had already risen.

I placed my hand onto the entrance’s pillar and panted towards the floor. The sounds of my gasping, *haah haah,* basically did not stop.
Not so long ago, I escaped into an alley and got rid of many Gods.

Even though my physical abilities should completely be above theirs……But what on earth was that. There were a few times when I was nearly caught, it really gave off a feeling of survival. This was the first time I felt that the Gods could be that terrifying.

“Seal-san and the others were waiting for you for a long time nya. Even though the kitchen was so busy, we are still accommodating it, so you should also hurry up nyaa.”

“S…Sorry……”

“If the main character isn’t there, there is no way to begin, go quickly now.”

The cat person shop personal Anya-san was scolding me while she was welcoming me. The human……I recall that it is Runoa-san was also laughing at me.

Wiping my sweat and straightening my back again, I entered the bar.

“Bell-sama! Over here!”

The store filled with guests seemed to booming as usual. In the depths of the shop, Lili was waving her hands energetically towards me. She stood on the chair as if she was extremely happy.

Lili was also participating in today’s party. Because it was a rare chance, I tried to invite her. In the end, she replied that she will absolutely come, so I told Seal-san and the others in advance.

……Suddenly, I thought that it would be nice if Aizu-san was here. However, that person is currently in an <Expedition> at the depths of the Dungeon. It is impossible to call her over. In order to get rid of these greedy thoughts, I gently shook my head.

The prepared table was near my special seat at the corner of the counter. Aside from Lili, Seal-san and Ryu-san were sitting at the table. They were also wearing shop personnel outfits.

Facing the slightly smiling Seal-san and Ryu-san, who used her gaze to greet me, I bowed my head. This could be considered as my apology for being late.

“Bell……?”

“<Hestia’s Familia>?”

When I was swiftly walking over towards them, I noticed that a few gazes stabbed at my face.

Inside the bustling shop, noise with a strange atmosphere was mingled together.

I titled my head, but I did not halt my footsteps.

“White-haired human……That must be it. Think it was something like……<Little Rookie>?”

“So it is that kid?”

“Seems like he is called the World’s Fastest Rabbit (Record Holder).”

“Oiii, it has already been decided? It must be just that the Gods are making a fuss, right? Only one month, no matter what, it is impossible.”

“That’s true.”

“But it seems like it is true that he defeated a Minotaur. The Monster that appeared on the 9th Floor.”
“So I say, he only defeated a Minotaur. Don’t act easily surprised.”

“Then when you were a Lv.1, could you defeat a Minotaur? All by yourself, you know.”

“Hehe, who would do such a stupid thing!”

……When I passed through a few tables, there were people all over the place glancing at me. After every glance, whispers would follow.

Using my sixth sense, I could already feel that I was receiving a lot of attention from others. I was somewhat at a loss. Although these actions were very suspicious, I still could not hold back and turned towards the side. The Adventurers that had their gazes intersect with mine suddenly closed his mouth.

I tensed up for no reason and tried to hide my body as if I was escaping to the table.

“You’ve become famous all of the sudden, Bell-sama.”

“R…Really? I cannot help but think that I can’t calm down……Even just now, I was chased by Gods that I do not know……”

“That seems to be the fate of a famous Adventurer. It is not limited to Bell-sama, so please patiently endure it.”

Facing Lili, who was smiling over, I felt somewhat embarrassed.

I placed my right hand on the back of my head while I constantly twisted my body.

“Fufu, then since Bell-san has arrived, let us begin.”

“About that, Seal-san and the others don’t have to take care of the shop……?”

“Mia-mama said that she will lend us to you, so go drink happily. Afterwards, it is fine to just spend a bit of money.”

Listening to Ryu-san’s calm voice, I could not help but let out a wry smile.

Within the counter space, the shop owner Mia-mama was letting out uninhibited smiles while waving her hands over to this side. She probably meant that you should enjoy yourself on this kind of day.

Afterwards, we quickly lifted out glasses and toasted.

Due to Mia-mama’s recommendation, I also attempted to drink. Anyways, I should first order beer.

Seal-san wanted an orange-colored fruit wine. Because Lili said that she would not drink what she drank was juice. Lastly, Ryu-san only drank water throughout the whole event. In the end, only Seal-san and I ordered alcohol……

When the food was served, the gazes that kept firing towards us also disappeared. I was finally relieved. While I talked about my hobbies with Anya-san and Chloe-san, I was enjoying this wonderful time.

Lili was still slightly afraid of Ryu-san due to her past thieving activities, but she did not show it at all and giggled happily. Seal-san also slightly smiled and Ryu-san also corresponded straightforwardly.

What had happened before I came, I thought about this inside my heart when I watched the side of Lili's face.

"Come, Bell-san, drink more. Today Bell-san is the main character. Or are you saying that you wanted to eat something?"

"Ah, thank you……"

I do not know when Seal-san appeared next to me, but she was taking care of me vigilantly.

Pouring me wine, giving me a small dish filled with vegetables, constantly talking to me, and was very attentive……I do not know why I felt this, but the usual smile that Lili reveals was extremely terrifying.

Just when I was at loss, Seal-san exposed an extremely happy expression.

"It feels that……you seem to be extremely happy, Seal-san."

"Is that right?"

Seal-san looks to be somewhat excited. She placed her hands onto her slightly red cheeks and smiled shyly.

“If I say that this is all my achievement then it might be a bit arrogant……However, handing over that book to Bell-san must have helped. Once I think of this point, I feel especially pleased.”

‘That book’ probably referred to the “Magic Book (Grimoire)”. Her burning gaze was staring directly at me.

Seal-san smiled and glanced at my eyes. This kind of Seal-san gave off a powerful impact.

Then from beside me, Lili extended her hand and pinched me until it was painful.

The many layers on my face twitched. Right now, what kind of expression was I making?

“However, I should really congratulate you, Cranel-san. I did not expect that you would achieve a <Level Up> with just the power of yourself……Looks like I underestimated you a bit.”

“N…No……”

Sitting directly opposite of me, Ryu-san congratulated me.

Although Ryu-san’s expression completely did not change, I still felt a bit embarrassed.

“I…It is because a lot of people have helped me. Ryu-san, you also, towards me……”

“You do not have to be that modest. Even among the Monsters classified as a Lv. 2, defeating a Minotaur is a major feat. Cranel-san, you can feel more proud of yourself.”

Ryu-san seriously said to me. Her sharp gaze looked directly at me.

Perhaps noticing this now was a bit too late. However, I really am not accustomed to being praised by others like this.

I bowed my head while blushing and letting out a groan “Yes……” already used all my strength.

And Seal-san was still giggling……

“Lili was constantly worried about you. You do not know how many times my heart seemed to have split apart……”

“S…Sorry, Lili……”

“…….However, you were very cool, Bell-sama?”

D…Don’t say it again……

Towards Lili, who suddenly moved her face near my shoulders and smiled cutely to me, I gradually felt weak.

Her cheeks were slightly flushed and her large, maroon-colored eyes were looking right at me from a short distance away.

Was it the effects of the alcohol? My body feels somewhat hot.

“Cranel-san, what do you plan to do from now on?”

“?”

“Your future actions, I am somewhat concerned about it.”

After the conversation with Lili and the others was over, I prepared to continue the battle with the wine that I have not yet drank due to the intense bitterness inside my throat as Ryu-san talked with me. Listening to her question, I came out clean about my future plans, which I have not thought much about.

“About this, I plan on preparing some equipment tomorrow with Lili. After all, my armor was almost completely destroyed.”

“……About this matter, Bell-sama.”

“What is it, Lili?”

“Actually, the place I am currently living suddenly has a lot of work……So tomorrow, Lili can’t accompany you.”

“Eh, is that so?”

Lili shrunk back as if she was extremely sorry. However, she was constantly being taken care of by the place where she lived, so this was a compelling situation……I told Lili that I did not mind and then planned to consider about tomorrow’s plan.

It should be almost time to continue my exploration of the Dungeon, so I should at least prepare my armor.

Anyways, I should still be able to purchase the equipment by myself, so it should not be a problem, right? I’ll go tomorrow.

Although my identification ability is not that good……But this could be considered as learning.

“Then, Bell-san will be buying stuff by himself tomorrow?”

“Probably, since it became like this.”

“If that’s the case, can I come with you?”

“Eh!?”

After listening to Seal-san’s proposal, I could not help but cry out loud.

Beside me, Lili was also shocked and lifted her eyebrow. This was a threatening atmosphere……

“W…Why must you……”

“It is almost time for me to buy stuff……Although it will trouble you, if it is Bell-san, I believe it is okay. I also wanted to wander the streets and buy stuff together with you.”

“Not possible, Bell-sama! Seal-sama must be planning to find a convenient porter! Ehehe, Lili has completely seen through her trap! If this continues, Bell-sama would be completely eaten till even the bones would not remain, please reject her!”

“T…There’s no need to say it to this extent……”

While letting out cold sweat towards Lili, who forced herself over, I stared in the direction of Seal-san.

She was completely unmoved by Lili’s words and was still smiling at me. “I won’t do such a thing!” This is what her light gray pupils seemed to be saying while it was becoming increasingly gentle.

W…What should I do……?

Letting her accompany me to buy stuff is not a problem. However, refusing her one-sidedly was somewhat awkward……Ah, but Seal-san also has a criminal record. At first when I was invited to this wine bar……And before, I also helped out with washing dishes.

Just when I was in a dilemma between Lili’s protests and Seal-san’s slight smile, a banging sound came out of nowhere.

Behind Seal-san, a large shadow appeared.

“Don’t be silly!”

“UWAHH!?”

The plate swung downwards, *Bacha*, it hit Seal-san’s head.
It was Mia-san. She mercilessly beat the back of Seal-san’s head and was overlooking her, who was clutching her head.

“If I easily allow you to rest, then how would I manage this side, you ungrateful girl. Don’t get carried away!”

“Skipping work without discussing with me, what are you thinking of!” Mia-mama continued to speak.

On the back of her head, her light gray hair was tied up like an onigirl and revealed a tiny ponytail. Right now, she had her back facing us. Although I could not see her face, she was probably protesting about it with angry eyes. This point was extremely easy to see.

“Even if you look at me like this, it is useless. I am the law here. Ryu, tomorrow look over Seal.”

Mia-san used her nose to snort and without waiting for Ryu-san’s response, she headed back to the other side of the counter.

The other guests’ happily bustling sounds that seemed to surround us fell silent.

The awkward silence lasted for a while and Seal-san finally turned her head back towards us.

“Bell-san, I’m… hurt. Could you rub my head and comfort me?”

“Okay Bell-sama! No matter what, you must find some good products by yourself tomorrow! Lili is looking forward to it!”

I was worried whether or not Lili and Seal-san’s relationship would be in discord.

“Cranel-san, what about after that?”

“Eh?”

“I am talking about, what do you plan to do after you prepared some good equipment?”

“What……do you mean?’

“That is also true, then I’ll ask it bluntly. Cranel-san and Arde-san, when you are planning to continue to raid the Dungeon, are you planning to immediately head to the <Middle Floors>?”

After hearing these words, I finally understood Ryu-san’s intentions.

After I exchanged a glance with Lili, who formed a party with me, I looked at her once again.

“First, I plan on confirming my body situation at the 11th floor. If I could easily raid there, then I plan to continue and venture further into the 12th floor.”
“Ehehe, this is a wise decision.”

I told her, I planned to confirm my strength after <Level Up>, then break past the division line of the <Upper Floors>, the 12th floor. First, I must prepare and look at the situation. Then, head over to the <Middle Floors>. This was what Lili and I had discussed and decided upon.
Probably, Ryu-san was currently worried about us.

“Although it may be somewhat nosy……but I feel that it is still best to not venture into the Middle Floors. At least after I have looked at your situation, this is what I think.”

“In other words, Ryu-sama believes that Bell-sama and Lili is not an opponent for the Middle Floors?”

“I did not say that. I only wanted to say that the Upper Floors and the Middle Floors are not the same.”

Although she should not be saying these words, Ryu-sama continued to speak.

“This is not about the problem of each person’s ability, but rather it is not a place where a single person can cope. The Middle Floor is a place like this. I do not know how much help Arde-san can bring, but if Cranel-san is alone, he would not be able to deal with the monsters and the terrain of the Dungeon.”

“Then, Ryu-sama……”

“Yes. You should increase the members of your party.”

Based on raiding the dungeon, a three-man cell is the basic formation. At least, this is what the guild recommends.

A three-man party……In other words, attack, defense and support, a system where all of it could be displayed mutually.

When the vanguard prepares for an attack, the middle defender would prepare for defending against the enemy's counterattack, and would occasionally play the role of supporting the vanguard. The rearguard would perform long-range support attacks and perhaps would be responsible for treating the two people on the frontlines.

When they received an attack, it was the same. If the rearguard has the ability to counter the monsters, then even if they were attacked by numerous monsters at the same time, the vanguard and the middle defender must hold on and take advantage of it to break through the situation.

If it was a two-man cell, then one side would have a great burden, fighting alone was even more of an exception. In short, if it was not a party with three or more members, raiding the dungeon could be extremely difficult.

Comparing to substantially increasing personal abilities, adding a member to the team would be more meaningful.

This is what Ryu-san believes. The party with me and Lili would be overly burdened while raiding the Dungeon.

"However, Ryu? If there is only Bell-san and Lili-san, then wouldn't it be easier to escape? If there are too many people, then someone would be slow to escape, right?"

"What Seal has said carries some truth, if you are currently planning on escaping, then it means that you are already in a predicament. Instead of imagining that you would be forced into this dangerous situation, why not think about how to avoid this kind of situation from occurring? This is more constructive."

I could not help but utter a sigh.

This is a past Adventurer's experience. Right now, it carries a lot of persuasiveness towards us and was extremely easy to accept.

"You should expect to have a surefire plan. At the very least, you should ask one more person to join your team."

I deeply understand what Ryu-san was saying. Beside me, Lili also nodded her head and said that we would need to think over it.

However……The problem is that we do not have any candidates to join with us. If they have a goal, then they would have long joined another party. But precisely because of this, this is why she was telling us to “please find another person”……

Ryu-san, who was in front of us, seemed to be hiding something, so we could not count her. The remaining person that I know of is Naaza-san from Miach-sama’s place……Ah, that won’t work. I cannot forcibly pull that person, who had a personal trauma with Monsters, to join my party.

As expected, I should do a bit of persuasion between the <Familia>?

I could not help but put my hands on my forehead.

“Hahaha, are you worrying about the things about your party? <Little Rookie>!?”

Eh? Hearing this sudden loud noise, I could not help but call out.

Lifting my head to look around, it turned out that a guest at another table was drinking while yelling out to this side.

As my face froze, that guest——a male Adventurer brought his two companions over to this table. When they headed to the place behind Ryu-san, they stopped their movements.

However……really rough.

The forehead and cheeks were filled with deep scars……This would make people want to unconditionally retreat.

“I heard what you were saying. It seems like you are finding companions? If that’s the case, why don’t you join our party?”

“Eh!?”

This time, I was really surprised.

A person I have never seen before suddenly invited me to join their party.

“W…What is going on?”

“Nothing, it is all good intentions, good intentions. Because my peers are troubled and I am so~ kind, so I extended a helping hand. Hehe, I don’t look like it, right?”

“N…No, I did not mean it that way……”

“Right? This is to help each other, help each other~. So I would like to enter the hot topic now, letting you join our party is not a problem……right!”

“Nnn……!?”

A heavy alcohol scent……

His breath was overwhelming strong and nearly made me want to escape. Beside me, Seal-san also had a wry smile emerge, Lili even let out an undisguised look of disgust. Ah, right, she was overly sensitive to Adventurers……

Ryu-san, who had the Adventurers behind her, should be the one suffering the most. However, it seems like she was already accustomed to it, her expression did not change as she sat on the chair.

“Then! We will bring you to the Middle Floors, correspondingly……”

……Eh?

The situation before seemed to have changed……?

“Lend these girls to us!? These beautiful fairies!”

……Uwahh, Uwahh!

“I also want to have an elf to pour wine for me, you understand right? I do not know how much money you spent, but sharing is the basics for being companions! Right!?”

Although I really spent a lot of money……but this was not the point.

Aside from the guy in the middle who was constantly speaking, the two people behind him, what should I say, were using very vulgar gazes to stare at Seal-san and Lili. Lili already has shown a disgusted expression.

……No, that was not feasible.

People, who look at females with such eyes, how could I cooperate with them!

Although I am still not used to dealing with such situations, Seal-san and the others are here, I must let them see my “macho-ness”……!

Although I have not yet finished thinking of what I should say, I should still first reject their request.

“No need. He does not need your help.”

However, someone said it earlier than me.

Ryu-san, who remained silent, was the first one to speak up.

“……Oh? What did you see, elf-chan? Are you saying that we aren’t able to protect them?”

“Yes, so please head back.”

“Ahah, hey, did you hear that! A newcomer to the rookies seem to think that we are in the way! Isn’t it the opposite, haha!?”

The men laughed together. I lost the opportunity to stand up and could not interrupt.

My butt was lifted half-above the chair, I do not know whether I should stand or sit back down.

“Little lady, we have been staying in the Middle Floors for a very long time?”

“Really?”

“Yes, and all of the members are Lv.2.”

“I know. Then hurry and leave. You are not good enough for him.”

The refreshing laughing expression the men have suddenly twitched.

The smile seemed to have disappeared from their faces for a moment, after which they laughed again. This time, it seemed like they narrowed their eyes and revealed a fake mask-like smile.

I also know that the atmosphere had become very tense.

“Little lady, are we really that unreliable? Are we still brats that are like trash?”

The male Adventurers took a step forward and planned to place his hand onto Ryu-san’s shoulders.

Ah, the moment before I wanted to stand up, I recalled a phrase.

——to elves, if they do not recognize that person, they will not let them touch them.

“Don’t touch!”

At that moment, Ryu-san’s actions could be described as swift as lightning.

In a blink of an eye, she stole the half-finished beer mug that I used and as if she was shaking her right shoulder, she swung it backwards.

The next instant, *Kacha*.
The hand that was about to be placed onto Ryu-san’s shoulders was stabbed inside the beer mug, “Ah?”, the man’s eyes became round.

Then, Ryu-san stood up while twisting the beer mug.

“IT HURRTTTTTTTTTTTTTTSSSSS!?”

The burly men’s arm was twisted in an unimaginable angle and issued out a tragic scream at the same time.

“No, sorry. This is my own willfulness and my own selfish thinking. I do not want to let Cranel-san join your team.”

Looking at the man screaming in pain in front of her eyes, Ryu-san said this.

“And I also won’t let allow you to look down on him. He is my friend.”

She fiercely looked at the cowering Adventurer and twisted the beer mug again.

The screams became worse. With the help of the person’s companions, who was screaming out loud, the man was finally able to pull out his hand from the mug. *Bang*, he landed on the floor with his butt.
“……You, you!?”

“You bitch!”

“You actually dare to do such things!?”

Just when Ryu-san’s words tapped heavily in my heart, the excited and angered men cursed.

Ryu-san instantly lifted up a dagger. The three men prepared to engage her, but before that.

*DODON!* A large blunt sound exploded behind their heads.
“ “AH!?” ”

The man’s companions were lying on the floor.

With a stiff look of surprise, behind the man was two cat-persons who were carrying a half-destroyed chair.

“——Nyaafufu, the back of the head nyaa was empty nyaa.”

“Men are really troublesome, nyaa”

It was Chloe-san revealing a bright smile and Anya-san, whose cat ears were twitching.

It was apparent that they attacked the enemy from behind……But a single attack!? Was enough to defeat a Lv.2 Adventurer!

“Guest. Our fairies can be brutal, so it should be best to stop now?”

Runoa-san, who was carrying a lot of dishes and beer mugs, quietly said to the remaining man.

With a glance, it seems like she was not in a state where she could fight, but in my eyes, it seems like she had already entered an alert state, is there something wrong with my eyes?

From the surroundings, sounds of “Ahhh, got defeated.” Came. The other guests seemed to know that this situation would occur, laughed, and continuously looked at the man who was isolated.

“…….H…How is this possible, you guyysssssssssssssssss!?”

The man placed his hand to his waist. Under the light from the Magic Lamp, he pulled out a shining blade.

It was a Short Sword. It was unknown if the male Adventurer, who was distressed, would swing this weapon.

Looking at this, the shop employees of the <Mistress of Abundance> all narrowed their eyes.

I reflexively felt a cold chill rising from my back.

This male Adventurer would probably meet a tragic end, just at the very next moment.

In another direction, a massive explosion occurred.

(W…What happened this time!?)

I simply could not keep up with these dazzling developments and I confusedly looked over……This time, I really do not know what to say.

The counter……Originally, it should be an elongated horizontal table, right now it has become a V-shape. The customers sitting next to the counter seemed to have opened their mouth in surprise.

Standing at the center of the counter, which was caved in, was Mia-san, who had swung a fist down fiercely.

Runoa-san and the others all showed fearful expressions.

“If you want to cause trouble, then do it outside. This is a place where you eat and drink.”

The shop was quiet again. Runoa-san turned her gaze from the massive dwarf and quietly headed back towards her job.

Mia-san finally looked with a livid face to the Adventurer standing there.

“Hey, that idiot over there. Quickly take that group of fools and leave. If you dare cause trouble again——then I’ll bury you underneath the shop.”

Burying underneath the shop isn’t good. Just when I felt that I was letting out cold sweat, the man nodded without saying a word.

He carried his companions and hastily ran away.

“Idiot, pay your bill before leaving!!”

“Y…Yes!?”

After being scolded by Mia-san, the man probably left all his money behind. The moneybag that was filled with Varisu was placed onto the floor.

The Adventurer stumbled and crawled out of the bar, the guests were also gradually restoring the happy atmosphere. As if nothing had happened. The hobbit race once again began to drink and lively sounds rang out.

This bar could make a party of Lv.2 wet their pants and escape……

I could only look from aside……

“Sorry, the lively atmosphere suddenly had cold water poured on by us.”

“N…No, it does not matter……”

“Fufu, Ryu-sama is indeed powerful……Lili’s recently kicked stomach still hurts.”

Directly opposite of me, who panicked, Lili even praised and calmly apologized to Ryu-san.

Am I the only one who is not used to this kind of situation……?

Although the atmosphere was somewhat awkward due to the chaos, Seal-san stood up and clapped her hands together.

“Then, let us begin again?”

……This person is also very amazing.

Looking at Seal order new drinks and handing the drinks to each person respectively, I could not help but reveal a wry smile.

This time, it once again let me recognize that you should not mess around with the employees of <Mistress of Abundance>.

Then, we continued to drink and eat delicious food until late at night.

× × ×

A clear sky, a comfortable breeze blew up.

The time is the morning after the celebrations were over.

I used my hand as an umbrella to cover against the hot sun rays and quietly looked at the building.

It was the huge, white tower, <Babel>.

Because I needed to purchase equipment, I decided to visit <Hephaestus's Familia>'s weapon shops again.

Without saying, the weapons purchased here all have their quality assured. And since my insight was not good, there was naturally no need to keep my pride and head to another shop. Also, because I had come here together with Eina-san in the past, it was still a bit familiar.

As for the price, there is no need to be too concerned about it today. Because I had saved up a lot of money earlier……Plus, a few days ago, when I exchanged the <Magic Stone> from the Minotaur for money, that thing was actually worth 50,000 Varisu. The people at the exchange were also extremely surprised, probably because that Minotaur was rather special……After all, it had even been equipped with a large sword.

Anyways, the budget inside my hands was above 100,000 Varisu. I could not help but smile. Then I headed into the main doors of Babel.

I did not use the Magic Elevator and instead climbed up using the stairs to reach my destination, the 8th floor.
Occasionally, I would look down from a certain window, the blue Orario scenery was extremely beautiful.

(I'm here.)

The 8th Floor.
Aside from the elevator in the center that extended to the very top, there were many shops surrounding it. Signs that mimic swords, spears and other weapons were decorated among the doors of the shops.

Every time I pass one of the shops, I would stop and look. Finally, I reached the armor shop.

The lightweight body armor that protected my body was completely destroyed, so I should start from here.

The shop was still like a forest of armor. Compared to the last time I was here, the shop model's body armor color scheme was more moderate. It was all black or gray.

(I should be able to afford this Floor's armor……Right?)

I confirmed the price of the items one by one……21,000, 35,000, 64,000……Yes, looks like I can manage. I am not purchasing just armor, so I have to be careful.

Not so long ago, I would never have imagined that I would have a day like this.

(……Is it already sold out?)

From very tough to very beautiful, although I could casually pick even the high-class armor, I was still looking for a specific blacksmith's work.

The lightweight armor that I was always wearing before it was destroyed by the Minotaur. Name, it seemed to be called <Rabbit Armor> or something……lightweight, tough and most importantly, it fitted my body size.

I walked through every corner of the shop. Just like last time when I found that armor, I even walked to the shop's corner where armor was not decorated. Even the boxes, which were filled with spare armors, I confirmed each one.

The harvest was……zero.

"……"

I felt that my stomach seemed to be showing some symptoms of indigestion. Even though there was no need for it to be tangled up.

I recall that he was called <Welf Crozzo>.

(……Let's try asking.)

Because I refused to give up, I decided to head towards the counter.

Even though there were many defensive gears that were more excellent than my previous armor, I still could not make up my mind.

When did I become one of his patrons (Fan)?

“Why……is it like this……”

“?”

I walked a bit forward and could already see the counter. I heard a roar coming from near the counter.

One of the people at the counter, <Hephaestus’s Familia>’s shop employee seemed to be arguing with a customer. It seems like it was a huge fight.

“Why is it always, always……at that kind of corner……! Do you have a grudge with me……?!”

Walking nearby, I could hear the voices clearly.

The person standing in front of the awkward employee was a male human. He was wearing a black casual kimono……However, it seemed more like rags.

The red hair reminded me of flames. It seems like he is bigger than me. His height was also a little bit taller than me, it was a mid-size body build.

His hairstyle was a slightly longer short hair, it gave off an impression that his hair was too long and it was troubling him, so he casually cut it off.

On the counter, there were many boxes filled with lightweight armor pieces. From his rage, it seems like he is an Adventurer. Was it because there was a defect in the armor he purchased?

“I desperately made it! Shouldn’t I have a better treatment!”

“This is the decision from above……At least when you are able to sell it……”

“Are you trying to shirk responsibility!? These kind of words, you should better——!!”

The Adventurer in the casual kimono shouted and refused to give up.

The employee beside the counter seemed to be impatient and was looking at him, then he noticed my existence. He immediately smiled and said “Welcome!”.

Although I was curious, I still headed next to the counter and prepared to directly ask the employee a few questions.

“Do you have any problems?”

“Yes. Right now are you selling Welf Crozzo-san’s works……?”

——At this point, the sound stopped.

Not only was the employee in front of me shocked, but even the two people, who were arguing became stunned, and looked over at me.

Eh……W…What?

I could not help but be a bit afraid after being stared at from three directions.

“……Ah, about this, are you planning to purchase Welf Crozzo-san’s works……?”

“Y…Yes. I want to use Welf Crozzo-san’s armor.”

After being faced with a timid question by the employee, my response was also stuttered.

Then, the next one to respond was not the employee in front of me, but the youth who was protesting earlier.

“Fu……Hahahahahahahaha!? You deserve it! Even if it’s me, I would still have one or two customers!!”

I thought that he was going to laugh. Then suddenly, that person turned his body towards the employee, who he was quarreling with, and slammed his hands onto the counter.

The employee seemed to be speechless and uncomfortably shifted his sight.

Just when I did not understand what happened and could not conceal my confusion, the youth immediately turned over to my side.

“There is some, Adventurer. Welf Crozzo’s armors are here.”

“Eh!?”

“They are these.”

He brushed past the box filled with armor and pushed it to the counter in front of me.

Inside, there was a brilliant, shining iron-blue lightweight armor.

This armor was similar to the one I used before.

Although the details of the shape were slightly different……but I am not mistaken, this is the real thing! “How is it, do you want to use it?”

“Eh? T…This, isn’t this your item……?”

I do not know whether he understood my question or not, he only blinked at me a few times, then he smiled like a child.

Just like that, he revealed a brilliant smile towards me.

“Ahhh, this is my item…….It is the work that I created.”

“——Eh?”

“Since it is a rare opportunity, let me tell you my name, patron (Fan) number 1. I am Welf Crozzo. Currently, a very low-leveled blacksmith in <Hephaestus’s Familia>”

“Do you want an autograph?” He asked. Just like an onii-san, who takes cares of people, he smiled slightly……Crozzo-san was looking at me, who had not recovered.

× × ×

“So you are that <Little Rookie>!? The World’s Fastest Rabbit (Record Holder) that broke the record!”

“Your voice is too loud……And what is the World’s Fastest Rabbit (Record Holder)……?”

I was overwhelmed and made Crozzo-san quiet down a bit.

Crozzo-san and I were currently in a small lounge at the 8th floor and were talking near the Magic Stone Elevators.
After that, he asked me if I wanted to talk and invited me to this place.

I did not know that Crozzo-san’s works have been only sold twice and I, who was among one of them, actually wanted to purchase his armor again, so he was extremely interested.

The hard and tiring experience……Although the business side gave him a decent evaluation, he did not get the corresponding treatment at the shop. His previously sold works were even requested to be returned, the colleagues inside the <Familia> were all sinister individuals……Anyways, and he said a lot of things to me.

Seems like he was slightly excited since he also had a customer. Crozzo-san frequently revealed a mature smile towards me. Although I have not know him long, he gave off a professional impression.

“You really are smaller than me. No, Adventurer and Age is not related, right?”

I finally found the opportunity to introduce myself, Crozzo-san gently nodded his head. His red hair casually move based on his actions.

Instead of saying he had a handsome appearance, saying he had a cool appearance was more appropriate. His features gave an impression of someone strong-willed ——just like an uncompromising artisan in general —— His eyes and tensed up eyebrows. Even to me, who was somewhat passive, could see that he was very cool.

His physique was not extremely burly, it would be best described as a slim fit. However, from his open collar, his neck and chest were buff as he had undertaken blacksmith work.

“About this, Crozzo-san, how old are you this year……?”

“I am 17 years old this year. Right, don’t call me Crozzo-san. I do not like my surname.”

He suddenly said this to me in the middle of the conversation.

Although it was somewhat difficult for me to directly call out his name, but I still listened to his words.

“Then……W…Welf-san? What are you finding me for……?”

“Hey hey, do you have to add a –san? ……Forget it this time. Then, listen to me.”

Welf-san stood up from the chair and looked at me.

Beside his feet was the box carrying the new armor. “This is the item I created, taking it away is fine, right?” He casually carried it out just like this.

“Then I will say it bluntly, I do not want to let you go.”

“?”

“My works, whether it is a sword or armor, they do not sell. Although I am somewhat embarrassed saying it myself, I am confident about my own products. However, this point is useless. The works that were nearly sold seemed to have been returned and I do not know why.

“……”

Rabbit Armor……This name is the issue, right, but this is really an outsider’s opinion so I could not say it out.

“However, you appeared. An Adventurer who recognized the value of my armor appeared.”

“Yes, so……?”

“You came twice to purchase my products. You are my customer, a real customer. Is that not correct?”

If he says it like this……Then that is indeed true.

Even in the forest of armors, I still wanted Welf-san's armor.

"So, we, low-leveled blacksmith, are constantly competing for customers. If you are famous, then everybody would be attracted and come here to purchase your products. However, if you do not have any fame, then nothing good would happen. Our products are the same as the fledgling Adventurers, who would occasionally purchase the items after consider the capacity of their wallets. It is such a thing."

"Do you understand this situation?" He asked me like this. I reluctantly nodded.

Competing for guests……In other words, whether if they could become their customers. This could also be said as the basics of business. If the Adventurers, who were their customers, became famous, then the weapons he used may also shed some light. Even if the blacksmith was not famous.

In other words, it is similar to the meaning of advertisement……However, to the low-leveled blacksmith, having ties with the Adventurers seem to be more important than I thought.

"This is a very rare opportunity. An Adventurer personally requested to purchase low-leveled products. I have said it earlier, "You recognize me", to us, there is nothing happier than that. You are my first "Customer", so I do not want you to escape……How could I let you escape."

On the contrary with his bold words, Welf-san's face still had a gentle smile.

Although I frowned and let out a wry smile, I still liked Welf-san's character.

This person is an excellent blacksmith.

"So, you hope that I will be your customer from now on?"

"That's correct……I want to go into this even further."

Then, this time, Welf-san revealed a shameless smile.

“How about directly making a contract with me, Bell Cranel?”

——directly making a contract?

I do not understand the meaning of this phrase. Welf-san simply explained it to me.

This is a contract signed between blacksmith and Adventurer. It is a very sturdy <Mutually Beneficial> relationship.

Adventurers would bring <Drop Loot> from the Dungeon for the Blacksmith. The blacksmith would forge powerful weapons for the Adventurer and would sell it cheaply to the Adventurer.

Mutual exchange. This is the cooperation between the blacksmith and Adventurer.

And most importantly ——the person who specially made the weapons are able to display a certain power.

I recall the phrase that Eina-san had once said.

“Hey……Is…Is that okay?”

“Hey hey, this is my line. You are already Lv.2, to the nameless me, who does not have the <Blacksmith> ability, how would I match you.”

I originally wanted to say that there is no such thing. However, I once considered my own position, indeed, probably it was just as if he had said.

Refuting his words is not being modest, I’m afraid it would make Welf-san unhappy.

I suddenly felt nauseating and said nothing.

Welf-san squatted down, used his arm to hold my neck, smiled and came over.

“And look. The shops that are selling swords, axes and shields. They have been secretly peeking at us, right?”

“Ah, yes……”

Although they are varying races, but a few demi-humans were frequently looking at our side.

It seems like that they are very anxious……

“These people all fancy you. They are just like me, they want to sign a contract with you.”

“Eh?”

“Not just only you. The Lv.2 Adventurers, who have <Level Up> are all being targeted. There are both good and bad points. This is the difference between a Low-Class Adventurer and a High-Class Adventurer.”

R…Really……?

I widened my eyes and intently stared at the side of Welf-san’s face.

He is currently letting out a smile of victory towards those blacksmith. After noticing my gaze, he gently smiled and said. “So that’s how it is.” He casually released the embrace on my neck.

“It is my desire to become your personal blacksmith. If you hesitate, another blacksmith will come over and I will lose the customer that I nearly have. No matter what, to me, I would like to sign a contract with you.”

“And if I were to sign a contract with a promising Adventurer, my value would also increase.” Welf-san simply said while laughing.

“……Before I say these words, you may not believe it. However, Lv.2 is not important. Within the many armors, you selected my work. I did not expect that one day a person would say that they would like to use my products……right?”

“……”

“It feels like a sudden surging passion appeared.”

This could be the luck of a blacksmith. Welf-san was somewhat shy.

I was also happy that I heard he had the intention of forming a contract with me from the very start.

Although I wanted to say that he overrated me, however, we were both rookies. Once I thought about the two of us working together, I could feel warmth inside my heart.

Although I cannot express it……I feel that this kind of thing was pretty good.

"……I understand. Then I'll sign a contract with Welf-san."

"Okay, let's settle it! I was thinking of what I should do if I was rejected!'

He held onto my hand, which I extended, and stood up.

"Please take care of me from now on, Bell." After hearing him say these words, I was somewhat embarrassed.

His hand was larger than mine and was warm like a stove.

"We will discuss about the formal contract next time……"

Welf-san said while gently shaking out hands.

He displayed his victory to the surroundings, and the blacksmiths, who saw this scene, regretfully left.

After Welf-san looked around and confirmed that his peers are all gone, he released my hand and apologetically scratched his head.

"Then, I'll say it……Could you listen to my selfish request?"

I was shocked and looked at Welf-san.

"I will obviously return the favor to you. I will remake your equipment free of charge."

"Eh!?"

“So there is no need to be surprised. A blacksmith requires a reliable Adventurer, doing this should be taken for granted.”

I had never dreamed that he would promise to give his works to me free of charge.

If that’s the case, there is no need to purchase the completely destroyed equipment……

I revealed an idiotic expression.

“Then can I get to the main topic?”

“……”

I swallowed a mouthful of saliva and waited for his next words.

“Please let me join your party.”

## Chapter 3
# The Blacksmith's Hidden Secret

“Finally, we reached the 11th floor!”

Welf-san said as he used one hand to support his waist, while the other hand was carrying his weapon.

Indeed, just as what he had said, we were currently located on the 11th floor of the Dungeon.

The <Room> in front is the starting location of the 11th floor. The broad staircase that extended through the center of it. Although this floor also has mist, the design is different than the 10th floor. It would not appear at the starting location where we were currently at.

Here the view was extremely wide. Looking around, it is a lush grassland, the height does not exceed half of a boot and the thick dead wood known as the <Dungeon’s Arsenal> was scattered around the surroundings.

“Is it the first time for Welf-san to come to the 11th floor?”

“Ahh, that’s correct. But sorry, Bell. I keep troubling you almost every day.”

Yesterday, I was shocked when I heard that Welf-san wanted to form a party with us. However, after I heard his objective, I swiftly agreed.

First, we signed a direct contract, there was no reason to not let him save face. Furthermore, it was a blessing that our small team would be able to gain strength.

“No problem, and it is for the ability <Blacksmith>, it is not completely unrelated to me……”

“Since you are this kind, it really helped me a lot.”

Welf-san’s objective is to earn the development ability <Blacksmith>.

Without this ability, for a blacksmith, it could be said to be a world of difference. It is not incorrect to say that it would decide their life. Welf-san unwillingly said that the <Familia> members which he used to enter with had already <Level Up> and he wished to catch up.

Actually, according to common sense, no matter which faction it is, when they are exploring the Dungeon, they would find people from their own Familia……

“Although saying this is a bit shameful……But when those people head off to the Dungeon, they do not bring me along, can you believe that?”

……So there was only this situation.

In short, Welf-san was being excluded by his own faction’s members. Although <Level Up> requires earning a lot of high quality <Experience Points>, he was too weak to fight in the lower floors by himself——Just thinking about it, he knew it was too dangerous——Therefore, he could only use the last method, which was to join another <Familia>’s party.

<Hephaestus’s Familia>’s members——before their job as a blacksmith, they would work independently and seem to judge and solve various problems by themselves, as well as learn from their competitors. The <Blacksmith> ability, in other words the matter about <Level Up>, they would not only have to risk their own life, but call their <Familia> comrades as well, which they have good relationships with, to explore the dungeon……

As for why there is such an exceptional situation of being excluded, Welf-san could only sulk and say: “They are jealous of my hidden talents”. However, was that the truth?

I do not know if he was aware of my gaze or not. He scratched his hair, obediently smiled, and said:

“Anyways, that is what happened. I am really thankful, Bell. Although I am isolated in my <Familia>, I still do not intend on abandoning it.”

“Uh, about that……Since I accepted your enormous gift, even if I wanted to reject……”

Welf-san threw a stupid smile towards me. I, who had presents blinding my eyes, could only feel embarrassed and followed along with a smile.

After all, the brand new armor I was wearing was still shiny.

"……Even though you said there is a new companion, isn't it just Bell-sama's heart being bought with equipment?"

Just when the two of us were talking, an unhappy voice interrupted from the side.

These words filled with discontent made me sweat and I could not help but look over. I could only see Lili, who had both her hands onto the strap of her bag, looking over here unhappily.

Although I wanted to tell her that it was a misunderstanding, from the perspective of a spectator, there was no difference of being bribed.

Right now, the equipment on my body, armor, was a newly produced light armor created before by Welf-san.

Compared to the earlier light armor, there were no major differences. It was a set with a breastplate, a knee guard in order to protect the knees, and a handguard with small pieces of ruby that extended from the wrist all the way to the elbow. Isn't it even cooler?

However, the armor still remained light. Although Welf-san said that the thickness of the armor had increased compared to the earlier armor set, I did not feel that it was as heavy as what he claimed. After changing into the equipment, I did not feel uncomfortable at all.

Although I was not fully attracted by this set of armor……Uh, but saying that it did not tempt me was a lie.

Therefore, I could only apologetically smile towards Lili's eyes of contempt.

"Ahh, Lili is really unlucky, it is a really pitiful sight. Even though you were only going to buy stuff, you completely obeyed Lili's uneasy predictions, and brought back a bunch of trouble……Bell-sama's kindness really makes Lili burst into tears."

These sarcastic words that were as heavy as fists bombarded me and opened wounds, even Welf-san's armor could not cope with it……!

However, you said that the troubles have also increased……!

“You are saying too much, Lili!? Welf-san is not doing anything bad……What you said about causing trouble is absolutely a misunderstanding!?”

“——how is it a misunderstanding! Saying “during the period before I obtain the ability”, isn’t that basically using us! And isn’t he a temporary member of the party!? If this Blacksmith-san, who no one recognizes, completes his objective and leaves the team, then Bell-sama will have to go back to fighting alone because there is only a Supporter remaining! We just advanced further yet we would have to go back!? Isn’t that just wasting our lives! That’s right, it is simply an unpromising future!!”

With a sharp gaze, Lili rebutted my protest.

This stormy barrage made me become like a sieve, I was unable to speak, and bowed down under Lili’s sharp tongue.

Too embarrassing……W…Welf-san’s gaze……!

“Bell-sama, why did you not discuss with Lili and just casually allow him to join!”

“I… I couldn’t……?

“It isn’t that you couldn’t, but having said that, it cannot justify why you did not discuss with Lili! Hestia-sama also requested me to carefully take care of Bell-sama!”

I…Is that so. However, I say Kami-sama, you even requested Lili to do such things……Am I really that unreliable?

I sadly bowed my head and looked at Lili, who was glaring at me with a menacing atmosphere. It feels that the reason of her anger was not only because of Welf-san.

How should I put it, it seems like she was extremely concerned about me……or something similar. It probably isn’t true.

Probably, it was because I make others feel that I am not trustworthy, so that she must watch over me before she stops.

“What is it, am I really a hindrance, pipsqueak follower?”

At this time, Welf-san, who was observing us from the side, began to speak.

Originally, Lili did not like Welf-san. After hearing <Pipsqueak>, her expression worsened.

“I am not a pipsqueak! Lili’s name is Liliruca Arde!”

“Is that so, then nice to meet you, Follower Lili.”

“……I won’t argue with you, since there is no reason to waste my energy.”

Looking at Welf, who was playing dumb, (no, perhaps he really was dumb) bow down and apologetically smile, Lili could only turn her face to one side.

Welf-san still had a cheerful expression……I do not know why, but I had a premonition that there would be much more trouble in the future.

“……Then, Lili. Although it is a bit late, let me introduce him. This person is Welf Crozzo-san, he is a blacksmith affiliated with <Hephaestus’s Familia>.”

I think that I should at least get the basics done, thus I told Lili Welf-san’s full name. From the beginning, at the meeting up location this morning, Lili’s irritated mood rapidly increased, so I did not have the chance to say it.

As for Lili’s name, Welf-san had just heard it from her, so it should not matter.

I did not expect that Lili would have any response and would only continue to speak

——

“Crozzo?”

The instant she heard Welf-san’s name, Lili turned back rapidly.

I did not expect such a big reaction and did not finish speaking my sentence.

“The surname of the Cursed Magic Swords Blacksmith? Is it that withering, famous Blacksmith Family?”

Magic Sword, Blacksmith……?

No, compared to that, what is a Blacksmith Family……

I could only understand half of Lili's words, so I looked towards Welf-san in confusion.

His face suddenly sank and he also pursed his lips.

"T…That……<Crozzo> is?"

I looked at the two of them who revealed completely different expressions and asked about the matter regarding Welf-san's surname. Lili widened her eyes and looked at me with a completely silent expression.

"Bell-sama, you really don't know anything……?"

"Uh, that……Y…Yes."

There was no way of denying it so I simply nodded.

Lili sighed and began to explain it briefly.

"Before, <Crozzo> had acquired the status of nobility by presenting to the royal family <Magic Sword>, it is a famous family among Blacksmith families. According to this, the creations of <Crozzo> were all <Magic Sword>……The amount of swords that have been dedicated to the royal family throughout the generations has already surpassed millions."

"Millions……!?"

"It is not incorrect to say that they are the leader of Magic Swords. There were also stories that their swords could <Evaporate an ocean>……"

After Lili said up to this point, she paused and glanced at Welf-san.

She pondered what to say for a while and afterwards, she quietly continued:

"……One day, they lost the trust of the royal family. Up till now, it has completely gone downhill……"

Lili ended with a somewhat anticlimactic explanation, and I did not know what kind of expression to make as I look at Welf-san.

After Welf-san scratched his head, he waved his hand.

"……It's not a problem. Anyways, that's what happened, it does not matter now. Since we arrived at the Dungeon, there is only one thing to do, right?"

"Ah……Y…Yes."

Welf-san bowed his head and looked at me. He smiled slightly and simply changed the topic.

The weapon placed on his shoulders……The Long Sword, whose broad blade boasts the largest attack range, sunk into the grassland.

I awkwardly nodded. Lili, who was beside me, staring at Welf-san's face.

"——?"

"Ah?"

Just when we faced each other, *biki,* a sound entered our ears.
There was only a slight pause. We, who were battle-hardened, did not need to consider anything and knew what this unlucky tearing sound represented.

Monsters were being born in the Dungeon.

"Uuuu, WAAA……!"

"……It really isn't small."

"It's an <Orc>."

Following the three different reactions, the dungeon walls in front of us constantly cracked and shattered.

And after the walls were destroyed from the inside, a thick brown arm was revealed from the hole.

The remains of the crushed dungeon walls scattered constantly down to the floor like an egg shell. Following the destroyed walls, not only a left arm, even a right arm and lastly, a huge pig head also appeared in front of us.

*"BUGI……OOOOOO……"*
After this hoarse cry, the Orc's full appearance finally emerged.

(This is the first time I witnessed the birth of an Orc……)

The instant I witnessed the birth of the large-sized Monster, I could not help but suck in a cold breath.

The scene of its huge body crushing the walls was indeed shocking.

The Orc that was crawling on the ground slowly stood up.

"……It's still not finished. So that's why it is said that from the 10th floor onwards, it is not a joke."
Yes, the sounds of the walls being crushed did not stop yet. The surroundings were all echoing the same sound. Looking closely, monsters emerged from all the walls of the room.

From the 10th floor onwards, it is possible that a large amount of Monsters would instantly appear in the same area. Once this phenomenon appears, the area which was completely empty before would soon be packed with monsters. Some even call it <Monster Party>.
Needless to say, this is a very dangerous situation. Especially when you are in the center of the room. You would be instantly surrounded by monsters. I unconsciously let out a wry smile.

“Ara, don’t be so pessimistic. Fortunately, this hall does not have any fog and the area is also very big. We do not need to be worried about being surrounded quickly. In case of the worst situation, we can still retreat to the 10th floor.”
Lili calmly finished speaking. “Heh”, she shook the bag from her shoulders.

She had once partied with many Adventurer teams, and she also had experience of coming down to the 11th floor. Although her <Status> was the worst out of all of us, her guts were not small.
After listening to her words, I immediately turned back and looked at the large staircase behind us. My heart immediately calmed down a bit.

“Okay, leave the Orc to me.”

“Eh, is that okay?”

Welf-san volunteering on his own was outside of my expectation.

The Orc’s power was enormous. Basically, if you directly take one hit, it was enough to cause a Lv. 1, no, even a Lv. 2 Adventurer to lose their battle ability.

Looking at me, who was surprised, Welf-san also had an incredulous expression.

“This is what I wish for? Their actions are slow, and their head is also big. Even if it is me, I can easily settle this matter.”

Ah, so you were thinking of it like this……

I do not know whether if I was overly cautious or Welf-san was overly daring. Anyways, it seems like he viewed the Orc as if it were a weakling. Welf-san quickly looked in front and smiled.

<Hephaestus’s Familia>. Although it is a faction that focuses on Blacksmithing, its combat ability is not to be underestimated. A large part of the members are so-called Combat Blacksmiths. Welf-san is not an exception —— Although he claims that it is something that he had to do in order to earn the <Blacksmith> ability —— on the way here, it was possible to tell that his battle ability was definitely in the lead, in terms of a Lv. 1 Adventurer. He would definitely not be a burden even on the 10th floor.

“Bell-sama, please move by yourself according to the opportunities you see. Let Lili offer her power and help out this Blacksmith-san. However, truthfully speaking, if Bell-sama could take care of this side, it would be the best.”

“Oh? What, do you find that I am an eyesore, Follower Lili?”

“Hating you is obvious. Lili only does not want to drag down Bell-sama.”

Lili directed and revealed an evil grin towards Welf-san. I could only let out a wry smile.

Lili’s proposal was based on the premise that I had already leveled to Lv. 2. She felt that after <Level Up>, I should be fine working independently.

There was nothing to object to.

……And, although this may be a bit presumptuous.

I wanted to understand my current strength.

“Okay, once there are a lot of Imps, it would not be easy to deal with.”

“There is no need for you to say that. Bell-sama, you understand, right……”

“Yes, rest assured, I will not be careless.”

We all drew our weapons and placed our posture.

I stretched my body and immediately switched my mindset. Then I rushed out in one breath.

“HIIII!” “HIIGGYAA!”

I flew across the grassland and rushed towards the Imps that gathered together.

On the way to the 11th floor, although we encountered monsters many times, it was all dealt with by Welf-san. This is the first time I am going all out in a battle today.

The swarms of sights and sounds may seem to be intimidating, it was 1 vs. 5, and the enemy numbers were increasing.

It was impossible to count the amount of monsters being born by the dungeon. Following my attack, the surrounding Imps also joined the battle.

——But today, I bravely moved forward.

I further lowered my upper body.

Looking at the distance between my enemies shorten, I ferociously stepped down on my right leg.

Then, the grassland exploded.

“——Huh?”

The Imps appeared in front of me.

No.

It was me, I instantly shortened the distance between the two sides.

This acceleration was really not a joke, even the sound of the wind beside my ear was whistling.

However, even if my speed was fast enough so that I turned into a blur, it feels that I was able to keep up with it.

Me suddenly appearing caused the Imps to widen their eyes and I suddenly swung downwards towards them with the <Goddess’s Dagger>.

*Sannn*, a swift sound rang out.
“!?”

The Imps’ head entirely flew off.

The remaining ones could only look at their comrades' flying head or stare at the purplish-blue light path of movement.

This unexpected situation made them all dumbfounded and I did not hesitate to attack them.

Beheaded.

After my body's jump that was floating like a feather, I dashed through the enemies like a bolt of lightning. The instant I passed by, an Imp's body would be torn apart and scattered down onto the floor.

One slash for one. The <Dagger> and <Goddess's Dagger>'s flashes intertwined. Under their sharp movement that goes through their bodies, I cut the Imps into pieces.

(Too slow, is it……No?)

Every time, it was me who made the first move. The Imps could not even counterattack even once in the face of my attacks.

It was not that their actions were slow.

But it was because my actions were so fast that they completely could not react to it ——

(——I… I became faster!)

It was not the same. It was completely different. This is already another dimension!

Whether it is the attack, speed or even reactions, all of them were reborn!

This is the <Level Up>!

Goddess's Grace!

"AHHHHHHH!!"

“Heeh!?”

I used the roundhouse kick that I was personally taught by Aizu-san and kicked the Imp in the chest. The small-sized devil-type monster flew towards the opposite side with incredible speed. After constantly rolling on the floor, it powerlessly fell down onto the grassland.

Far more than 10 Imps were defeated by me in an instant.

“OHHHHHHHH!”

“!”

With a roar, new monsters were approaching.

Their sizes were similar to mine. They stood up with their two short legs, the front limbs had large, tough claws growing out of them. On their back, a carapace with stripes was being carried like armor. The scaly skin extended all the way to the head and formed a helmet-like structure along with their horns.

Two of these armored mouse-like monsters waddled and charged towards me.

This is a monster that only begins to appear on the 11th floor. <Hard Armored>.
Facing this enemy that appeared for the very first time, I immediately flipped through the thick monster information dictionary that Eina-san had crammed into me inside my mind and found its information.

Hard Armored is similar to the Killer Ants in nature. Although it has a hard carapace, there is nothing protecting its chest so it is incredibly soft. And compared to the Killer Ant that is covered with a hard shell throughout its body, this weakness is far easier to take advantage of……but at the same time, its shell is far harder than the Killer Ants.

Its shell leaves all the 11- 12th floor monsters behind in the dust. In other words, its defense is second to none on the Upper Floors.
Even a dwarf’s attack would be easily rebounded. The shell is just like a layer of iron. It is said that a Lv. 1 Adventurer will not be able to defeat this kind of monster in a blade fight.

To the Adventurers, who were suited for the 11-12th floors with their basic abilities being B – S, the difficulty of defeating Hard Armored is completely different than other monsters.
“——Take this!”

Just when we were facing each other, the instant our gaze met, both sides moved.

My feet suddenly accelerated.

And one of the Hard Armored curled its body and rolled towards me.

The carapace on its back is not only a sturdy shield, but it is also its weapon. With a high-speed rotation, it can break apart an Adventurer party’s power. A half-assed counterattack would never work.

The huge meat bullet was approaching me while spinning. And I dodged it to the side when the distance was nearly zero.

First cut apart the subsequent fear.

I turned to the Hard Armored that did not change its shape.

“OOOOOOO!”

Its claws were already brought out and rushed over towards me.

This time, it was the same. When the two of us approached to an extremely close distance ——I jumped away significantly.

“!?”

In front of its eyes, I depicted a right-angled movement trajectory.

Instantly disappearing outside of its vision, I made it so that it lost sight of me.

After passing through, I flew past its blind spot and immediately reached behind it.

Then I suddenly stopped the force coming from my knees and matched it with my entire body's strength as I swung the <Goddess's Dagger> in a reversed grip.

"——*Ga*!?"
The sturdy shell body was cut apart by me in one slash.

——Amazing!

Even the sturdiest Upper Floor defense was broken down.

Realizing that my attack could already cut through the enemy's carapace and onto its body, I could not help but hold the dagger in my hands with a bit more strength.

"Oooooooo!"

The remaining Hard Armored once again turned into a ball shape and rushed over.

I extended my right hand towards the Monster who curled up together and was rolling over at high speed.

"<Fire Bolt>!"

The lightning flames erupted.

After an enormous roar, the scarlet flames that was faster and thicker than before pierced through the ball shape that was spinning.

An explosion.

At the center of the explosion, I could see completely charred charcoal. That is a ball of armor, whose carapace was blown apart. Its body was completely shattered and it fell onto the ground.

Then the body, which was surrounded with smoke, dropped down from the air and was unable to move again.

(Even Magic was strengthened…….)

I looked at the brilliant scene and slowly retracted my right hand back towards my chest.

Not only was the power different, even the size and scale had changed.

Not just magic, it feels that my entire body had endless stamina……

(The distance must have shortened!)

Within my mind, a figure of a female swordsman appeared.

Although it is still a distant scene, I had gone further down the path of chasing that golden figure.

My heart was rapidly jumping, I desperately restrained this excitement.

“————OOOO!”

At this time, a loud roar came from the Orc and attracted my attention.

I was reminded of Lili’s words and headed towards the source of the sound. Welf-san and the Orc’s battle was about to occur.

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“Fast……”

Welf muttered.

He had inadvertedly caught a glimpse of Bell’s series of actions as he entered his view.

Whether it was movement, attacking first or the magic activation speed. Without an exception, all of it was just like a rabbit.

Although he did not know what the source was, but Welf finally understood why Bell had a nickname of <Rabbit>.

“Fufu, please do not be stunned and get flattened okay? Bell-sama will be sad.”

“Follower Lili, I seem to understand your temper.”

Lili’s voice came from behind, he then calmly nodded.

The reason why he did not even turn back was because a few seconds later, he would start a battle against a huge monsters who had issued a piercing cry.

After noticing Bell’s gaze, Welf smiled triumphantly and set up his posture.

“Okay, time for the second one.”

Behind him was an Orc’s corpse lying next to Lili. He placed his long sword onto his shoulder.

*“OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!”*
*Don! Don! Don!* The Orc was slowly approaching here.
Welf raised his lips and fearlessly rushed towards the opponent.

“OOOHHH!!”

Noticing that its prey took the initiative to rush over, the unarmed Orc used its arm to do a sweep.

Facing the sweep that was heading towards him, Welf swiftly ducked in order to evade.

The long sword at his right hand was still placed on his shoulder and at the same time using his left hand as support, he tried to lower his body as much as possible and rush over like a wild beast.

The instant the enemy’s huge arm swept past the top of his head, he suddenly got up and swung the giant blade.

“——WA!”

With the sound of flesh tearing apart, the Orc’s unsteady stomach was cut by the large blade and its belly jittered.

Green blood splashed everywhere. After the monster was subjected to a large-sized weapon’s impact, it was thrown back substantially and the back of the head hit the ground.

“I’ll send you to hell!”

Welf then jumped and landed next to the head of the Orc.

His hands that were holding the long sword was lifted high above his head. He looked at the Orc’s eyes, which do not close even in death, and slashed downwards.

*Don!!* A loud sound occurred.
“Follower Lili, next!”

“It has already come!”

He left the monster, who had its head cut apart, and turned to the position that Lili pointed out.

Then he saw the waving of a natural weapon——An Orc with dead wood. Facing the sudden rush from the monster, he smiled slightly and licked his lips.

“This might be troublesome!”

“I——know!”

Lili ran around it in a circle and rotated to the rear of the Orc.

She lifted the hem of her robe and shot an arrow with a hand crossbow that was tied onto her slender arm.

The metal arrow hit the shoulder of the Orc.

“!”

The pain from the shoulder made the Orc stop its movement. Then, the pig headed-monster revealed an ugly expression and changed its target from Welf to Lili.

Then at this moment.

When the Orc was not prepared, Welf stepped forward with his left leg and entered its reach.

His black battle robe was dancing like fire and his boots sunk deeply into the ground.

“Go to hell!”

He raised the long sword high above his shoulder and fiercely swung downwards.

Following his right hand going down, this slashing attack that strained the body depicted a trail which slashed towards the Orc.

It was as if this movement was used to cut apart a Monster with a sturdy frame. The Orc did not have any time to make a sound and sprayed fresh blood as it stared at the crimson eyes. The entire body became stiff and after fading into an ashen color, it shattered.

This attack beautifully cut apart the <Magic Stone> that was hidden in its chest.

“Crozzo-sama, the precious Magic Stone was destroyed just like this by you, it is too outrageous! Bell-sama and Lili’s income will be reduced!”

“What can I do, I also did not intend to do that. Also, don’t call me by my surname.”

Lili chased after Welf’s mistake in hot pursuit. It annoyed him after listening to it and he powerlessly replied back to the chattering Hobbit:

“Speaking of when we are splitting the money, why is there no portion for me?”

However, only purplish powder was flashing as it descended towards the grassland.

“……Crozzo-sama!”

“So I said, don’t call me by my surname……Geh!”

Although he was currently arguing with Lili, he was also alert and noticed it.

There were two distinctly different monsters than the Orc that quietly snuck over and were planning to do a pincer attack on Welf.

<Silverback>.

This white furry monster had muscles intertwining within its body. It causes one to think of apes. However, what was different than apes was a tail-like, silver braid dangling from the back of its head.

In the past, Bell had once fought against this kind of Monster at the <Monster Philia>. It is a monster that represented the 11th floor like the Hard Armored. Compared to the Orc, whose strength greatly surpasses its agility, it was not significantly unbalanced. The Silverback, who has superior physical abilities, is definitely a formidable enemy.
Welf’s cheeks could not help but twitch. After hearing a sound coming from the deadwood behind him, another Silverback jumped to the ground.

“……”

“Geh……”

Welf shouted to himself that this was bad.

In the dungeon, the situation of being outnumbered and surrounded had to be absolutely avoided.

(I messed up……Isn’t this the same as fighting alone)

Cold sweat was oozing down from his forehead. He carefully looked at the three opponents.

He could not help but recall the past when he was excluded by his comrades and had angrily took a large amount of recovery potions and challenged the 10th floor by himself……It was a memory of barely surviving.
(I can only escape……No, can I escape?)

The encirclement between him and the monsters was shrinking, he anxiously pondered.

If he considered it for a bit, his strength was slightly above the Silverback. However, even fighting against one of them would use a lot of strength. If he was surrounded, he was definitely an easy target. Lili, who was nearby, had a face filled with fear and could not move. However, it was rather unrealistic to expect a lot of help from her, who was just a Supporter.

It's over. He could not help but think like this. However, he still concentrated and confronted the Silverback in front of him with his weapon on his shoulder.

Welf planned on breaking through the encirclement through one of them. In his countless experiences in the dungeon, he had also felt this annoying tension created by cries and anxiety. He felt that his stomach had frozen.

The explosive atmosphere drifted around.

The Silverback's two eyes, that confronted Welf, flashed.

The monsters where about to move.

The next instant.

"——One, Two!!"

"*GUUUU*!?"
"!!"

A person suddenly cut in from the side.

It was Bell, who directly charged here with lightning speed. His foot was like a javelin that headed directly to the side of a Silverback's face and he sent it flying. The

Monster's face was distorted at a weird angle and crashed into the companion that was next to it.

This sudden situation caused Welf and the other Silverback to freeze. Bell then pulled out the <Dagger>.

"Welf-san!"

When his eyes met with Bell's crimson eyes, Welf reflexively woke up.

His upper body moved ferociously to the side.

Bell brought his right hand behind his head and then suddenly threw the <Dagger>.

*"GUUU!?"*
"——!!"

The Silverback behind Welf had the <Dagger> stuck in its left eye.

The wailing Monster trembled and like a top, Welf turned his body and swung the long sword.

A silver colored flash simply went across the enemy's body and killed it.

"……"

The Monster's knees caved and it fell down onto the ground. Welf remained in a stance of holding the long sword and slowly turned his head backwards.

Bell had already eliminated the other two Silverbacks.

Welf looked at the scene in a trance, then he smiled and placed the long sword back onto his shoulder.

"As expected, teammates are a good thing."

He agreed with this from the bottom of his heart and the white-haired boy turned around and let out a blooming smile.

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“I say, you are still too fast. It isn’t strange for you to fly over here at any time.”

“I…I also am still a bit unsure……”

After the battle with a large group of Monsters had ended, we were temporarily resting.

The location was the beginning room of the 11th floor. Traces of the battle could still be seen everywhere on the grassland. For example, there were traces of the Dungeon Walls being broken down everywhere, even the dead trees were uprooted. In short, it was a mess.
Welf-san placed his long sword back into the sheath behind of him and strapped it to his arm. Then, he began to casually talk with me.

“As expected, having a talented person in battle makes everything easier. Although overly relying on it is also a problem.”

“When I was fighting, I also felt that it was easier than before.”

“These are the benefits of having a team. Because now a margin exists, whether it is physically or mentally, actions will be different than before. Of course, the strategy of facing a Monster also changes.”

Welf-san began talking about the benefits of a team. Because he had entered the Dungeon in a team before, he knew more about this than myself.

“For a temporary team, we did pretty well. Although we have not yet developed any teamwork techniques, we already have done very well breaking in together……This is all thanks to Follower Lili.”

“Lili is it?”

“Yes. Although the things she did may not seem remarkable, it was very important. And after we grouped together, in order to ensure smooth operation, she had always acted as the lubricant oil for us.” [11]
If it was really like this, then indeed, we were taken care by Lili a lot.

Perhaps we should use an example to describe this. Lili is concerned about the battlefield from the rear, and by applying clever support, she helps the team maintain a rhythm.

Welf-san felt that this is because she understood Adventurers extremely well, I understood why immediately. Whether when she was a Supporter or when she was a thief, Lili had met countless Adventurers.

“Anyways, Follower Lili is really diligent.”

“Always, at this time, I feel sorry for the Supporters……”

Welf-san laughed and agreed. In front of us, Lili was currently working hard on her job to recover Magic Stones.

Because the amount of Monsters we killed was enormous, her burden was not light. Although I wanted to help her out, I was refused. She energetically placed the bag onto her back and expressed that was is fine if we rest well now.

In her words, it was ‘that this is all part of her work.’

“Speaking of which, the amount of people seemed to be increasing, what shall we do? Should we switch to another location?”

“Yes, also……”

Before, there was not even a shadow of a person, but the surroundings now began to reveal the emergence of a few teams.

Because this room connected two floors, many people would pass by. And because there was no annoying mist, many teams would use this place as a base. So if we hunt here, we may run into trouble.

For example, being depressed after our kill was stolen and if the situation became big enough to be a dispute between <Familia>, then it would be even more troublesome. In fact, when we were battling earlier, there were small teams that fought against the prey that slipped through our net. Basically, when we are exploring the Dungeon, we

would have to avoid others. The consensus here was that we would not interfere with others.

……By the way, Lili had discovered the other teams early on and deftly tied up the Monsters we defeated together. It indicated that these were ours, so don't even try to steal from us.

Although this move would not be seen as remarkable, among the Supporters, only the ones that are highly experienced would know of such an advanced technique.

"……Or should we eat lunch here now? After all, there are a lot of people here, there is no need to worry about Monsters."

"If that's the case, indeed simply giving this place up would be infuriating, so we should make good use of it. I agree."

Welf-san agreed with my proposal. Although I felt that his perspective was a bit petty-minded.

Thus, we prepared to eat lunch after Lili came back.

(Speaking of which……When we reached the 11th floor, every team clearly seemed to be stronger……)
After I glanced over, I had this thought.

The teams that were scattered all over the room exuded a refined atmosphere.

The weapons and armor were also high quality goods, they exuded a sharp and sturdy atmosphere even without touching them.

The beast man carrying the broken bow, the large tomahawk that was placed on the floor by the Amazon warrior and even an elf that was equipped with a silver staff and wizard robes……All of them were races of demi-human that walked an unusual path.

(How many of them are people that <Level Up>……?)

Within the teams that were exploring the 11th and 12th floor, many of them had already began preparing for raiding the <Middle Floors>that was within their sight.

Therefore, it would not be surprising to see teams with a few people that have levelled to Lv.2.
……Can I really stand at the same place of those people?

I am already Lv.2, it should be fine to raise my chest up……but seeing the burly dwarf, my morale would always disappear halfway. Because my goal was still at a place that was still out of reach, it is still too early to act cocky at this time.

They must have very powerful <Magic> and <Skills>……

(Huh, right, my <Skill>……)

I remembered that I had also learned a <Skill>

<Hero's Wish (Argonaut)>. I had completely forgotten about it, only now did I remember……

(Only that when I was fighting as usual, nothing seemed to have happened……right?)

Although my actions became faster and more powerful, I felt that this was the effect of the <Level Up> and was unrelated to the effect of the Skill.

<Active Action>, <An action that was based on my consciousness>, <Pre-emptive>.

I could not help but recall about the things that I discussed with Kami-sama. I began to wonder about it.

As expected, I did not understand it. After all, I should already have done movement actions and attacking actions that were based on my consciousness, but nothing had seemed to occur. In other words, it could not be triggered by just my actions.

Perhaps there was a pre-condition like the Chant for Magic, is there some sort of catalyst?

(After all……)

……How did I learn this skill <Hero's Wish (Argonaut)>?

Because I <Level Up>?

Because I defeated the Monster known as Minotaur?

Or was it because from the bottom of my heart, I did not want to be disgraced in front of Aizu-san and was caused because I was not willing to continue being mediocre?

……At that time, I.

<Wanted to be——>

Hero.

I made this kind of wish.

"……"

Just like a civilian inside the world of myth.

Just like them, fearlessly facing their brutal enemies.

Just like them, selflessly sacrificing myself to save people's lives.

Just like that person, who had saved me.

I sincerely wished that I could be a Hero. Even if it was just one step, I still wanted to approach her.

A wish of wanting to be a Hero.

"……Hey, Bell, what are you doing?"

"!"

The words woke me up, I raised my head and looked at Welf-san, who was frowning in front of me.

I wanted to ask him what is it, but I found that he was staring at my right hand.

There were white particles flashing.

“……Eh?”

I could not help but stare and issued out a dumbfounded voice.

Beginning from my wrist, pure white particles that exuded a faint light
were wrapping around my hand.

The particles were smaller than snowflakes, and they gathered at my right hand at certain intervals. Just when I thought of this, new particles were produced again. It was like a video that was continuously repeating and they continued to be attracted to my right arm.

The light particles gathered, converged, and kept repeating.

It was as if the surroundings of my right hand was currently snowing and there were even cyclones.

And I noticed that there was even a *don, don*, sharp sound echoing.
Just like the sound when the clock hands moved a little bit.

“……”

“……”

Welf and I both looked at each other.

Both of us had a dumbfounded expression, it was assumed that neither of us would get an answer even if we asked.

W…What is this……?

I stared hard at my right hand that was surrounded in white light and could not wait to see a gap open up.

Then, Welf-san noticed the puzzled me and began to open his mouth——

“——AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!”

A deafening roar of terror came.

“ “!?” ”

Both Welf-san and I quickly looked up. Noticing that it was not just the two of us, all the Adventurers in the room had a frightened expression and stared at the same location.

In the entrance of the room, where it connected to other paths, an amber-colored scale Monster broke through the mist.

It had a long tail, razor sharp claws, plus a mouthful of sharp teeth.

It was approximately 150 centimeters in height, its body was four meters in length——a small dragon.

“<Infant Dragon>……!?”

An unknown Adventurer spoke.

This Monster that walked with four legs was of the dragon-race that was at the top of the countless Monster races. Although it had not yet given birth to its wings, in one glance, you could see that hard scales wrapped along its powerful body. It had a potential far exceeding the Orcs. Also, its blood-red eyes were wriggling back and forth.

<Infant Dragon>.

A rare Monster that appeared on the 11th and 12th floor.
In these vast floors, the total amount would not exceed 5. Being able to run into them is beyond rare, it could even be considered as lucky. That is, if you do not consider the report that it had once eliminated a party of low Adventurers.

That which did not exist in the Upper Floors, <Solitary King of Dungeon>, this small dragon was the true Floor Boss.

“————!!”

With a loud roar, the Infant Dragon moved. It used its tail to sweep away the closest elf Adventurer and sent him flying. That Adventurer instantly hit the walls heavily and his eyes widened. His neck was broken like a puppet who had his strings cut. Cries burst out from the surrounding.

Although it was not as strong as the Minotaur, it was still a powerful Monster, it would not be surprising if it was ranked as a Lv.2. Only now did everybody disregard each other’s unfamiliar identity and forge a temporary alliance. Seeing the people ignore the shackles of the teams, they began to chant numerous Magic, Amazon warriors and Dwarves also carried their large swords and axes, and rushed forward.

“Follower Lili, escape quickly!?”

In the middle of the confusion, Welf-san shouted out in panic.

Because I was stunned by the appearance of the dragon, only now did I see that the small dragon was heading to the distant Lili, who was recovering Magic Stones in the room.

Watching the small dragon approach, Lili was so scared that she could not move. My consciousness had not recovered yet, but my body had already rushed over.

I fiercely stuck out my right hand that was still shining and with a volume that could tear my throat, I roared out:

“<Fire Bolt>!!”

The next instant, all the voices were gone.

“————“

Pure white flashes.

Following the giant monster's roars, a pure white light exploded out from the horizon.

Exploding from my right hand that was inside the white light, lightning flames, <Fire Bolt> flew out.

Only that the scale was too unusual. The white light wrapped along the scarlet flames and with a destructive atmosphere, it headed towards the Infant Dragon.

The next moment, the small dragon was directly hit and sent flying towards a distant Dungeon wall.

A huge explosion.

"……*Ga*"
The amber-colored scales were peeling off.

The Infant dragon that was swallowed by the lightning flames cried out as it fell down. Although dragon skin has resistance to fire, it was completely burned away. Its enormous body had smoke rising from it and sparks were flying everywhere.

In the depths of the room, you could see the terrible situation of the wall that was cracked apart by the dragon's claws. Facing the large-scale <Fire Bolt>'s impact, the Dungeon wall seemed to be pulverized as if it was reduced into fragments after being struck by lightning.

*Gara, Gara,* after it was frozen for a second, the wall finally collapsed.
"……"

The room was shrouded in silence.

The Adventurers all stopped their actions and focused their attention onto me. This included Lili and Welf-san.

Shock, trembling……And there was also hostility. There was a variety of feelings, but I did not make any responses and only stared awkwardly at my retracted right hand.

I looked at my palms in shock, the white particles had disappeared. It was peaceful. As if nothing had happened at all.

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"……Fu"

I let my head come out from inside of my shirt and as if I was trying to release all my fatigue, I exhaled out greatly.

*Kacha*, I opened the door after changing into my clothes and walked out of the bathroom.
Kami-sama had already changed her clothes and was lying down on the purple colored sofa.

"Bell-kun, if you are tired, then you should rest, right? I will make tonight's dinner."

"No, it's fine. I will help!"

"Ohho, is it? Then let's do it together."

Because she has to work while I had spent a lot of time exploring the dungeon, both of us had come home late and started to prepare for dinner. The time right now was already in the evening.

Due to her wish, the chores would be shared between the two of us. I originally thought how could I bother Kami-sama with such things? However, she rebutted with a single sentence "Bell-kun, don't be so polite with me".

However, I still felt stricken by fear.

"……Ah, Bell-kun? There is something I wanted to talk to you about."

"What is it?"

Inside the small kitchen space, I was washing the vegetables at the sink while Kami-sama was cutting the meat as she talked.

I stopped my hands and looked at Kami-sama, who was standing on a chair due to height issues.

“Have you seen Freya……Ah, no, a silver-haired Goddess before?”

“A silver-haired Goddess-sama, huh? No, I don’t think I’ve seen……”

I replied after thinking for a moment.

After coming here, aside from Hestia-sama, the amount of conversations I have had with Goddess-sama’s could be counted on one hand. If a Goddess had such an eye-catching silver hair, then it should have left a deep impression on me.

“Ah, that’s true, indeed……”

Kami-sama lifted her head and stared at the ceiling. What was this about?

Speaking of which, after the God’s Meeting was over, she always had a preoccupied expression. When I asked her what the problem was, I would always get a wry smile as she shook her head and said “Not a big deal”.

Although I was quite curious about it, I should still concentrate on preparing our meal. After a moment later, Kami-sama and I placed the food onto the table.

“Eh~ If that’s the case, then that blacksmith is quite a good child.”

“Yes. He is extremely approachable, and gives off a reliable vibe. However, his relationship with Lili is the worst, it is a little bit hard to explain it.”

“Hahaha.”

During supper time, Kami-sama and I ate dinner as we talked and laughed.

The food had recently become better. No, it should be that the simple food from before had gradually been reduced.

Right now in front of the two of us, aside from the bread, there was a huge bowl of meat salad, potato croquettes were also piling up like a mountain……

Passing through this road that was kind of long, yet short……We finally escaped slightly from poverty.

“Ah, his character is decent and he is also a boy, so there are no issues. I agree. Bell-kun, do not let that person escape.”

“I know, Welf-san is also a blacksmith, and I heard that in a three-man party, it is a lot safer. If it is possible, I would like to continue just like this……”

“That’s right. No matter what, you have to keep him, if it is just you and that Supporter-kun alone, then it is still too dangerous.”

Looking at Kami-sama, who revealed a refreshing Goddess-styled smile, I also nodded cheerfully.

Even her twin tails seemed to be shaking with excitement. It seems like she was really concerned about us.

However, I was already getting used to this manner so I began talking to her about the thing that occurred today.

First, it was the matter regarding Welf-san. I had already mentioned that I signed a direct contract with him yesterday and I added that I would get a direct impression off of him today.

“Being able to form a party with Hephaestus’s child……Ah ah, it is only because you are my <Familia> that you would have such a fate.”

Kami-sama giggled.

Hestia-sama and Hephaestus-sama seemed to have known each other since their time in Heaven. It could be said that they were close friends. However, after coming to Orario, through their many experiences and also becoming a Main God of a <Familia>, they could not casually contact each other.

Towards this unavoidable fate, Kami-sama also felt that it was quite interesting and shrugged.

“……About that, Kami-sama? About Welf-san’s <Crozzo> surname, do you know anything about it?”

I took advantage of the idle moment and decisively asked Kami-sama about the problem I was always thinking about.

What Lili had mentioned, the matter that was related with <Magic Sword> and <Crozzo>.

Although I felt a bit sorry that I had to inquire about Welf-san behind the scenes, I still could not suppress my curiosity.

“<Crozzo’s Magic Sword> is it……? About this matter, I also know one or two things……But it should only be about the same as Bell-kun.”

“Is that so……”

Listening to Kami-sama speak, she had not come down from Heaven for a long period of time, so she was not clear about the Lower World’s matters……Therefore, it was normal for her to have a similar level of knowledge compared to me.

In the end, the matter about Welf-san was still half-solved.

“……Although I am not too clear about <Crozzo>, about that blacksmith-kun, Welf-kun, I can still advise a bit about his personal evaluation.”

“Eh!?”

“Hmmm, Bell-kun. Did you forget where I am working?”

Ah! Once she said that, I immediately understood.

Welf-san is affiliated with <Hephaestus’s Familia> and Kami-sama is currently working at one of their shops. If she was working there, then it might be possible to hear the evaluation of other members.

“How’s this, Bell-kun!”.  Looking at Kami-sama triumphantly lifting her overly huge chest, I could not help but swallow and blush as I forcibly smiled. I urged her to continue speaking.

According to what she said, after I had mentioned Welf-san’s name yesterday, she had immediately gone to gather information.

“As a blacksmith, his skills seems to be pretty good. Although he is only starting, Hephaestus would often mention him. In this aspect, there are definitely no issues.”

“H…Hephaestus-sama would often mention about Welf-san?”

“Yes. Although this was only mentioned when she was drunk after we drank together, it seems like she said that this child has talent, but he is unfortunate.”

The Main God of a widely renowned blacksmith faction would look favorably upon his talents……Could it be that Welf-san has top potential within the <Familia>?

“Hephaestus pays attention to him, not only is his evaluation high, but she thinks that he has a lot of potential……However, she also mentioned that this child’s perceptional aspect was a bit unfortunate.”

“……”

With a strong feeling, the name, Rabbit Armor, flashed through my mind.

By the way, the name of his light armor that he gave me had inherited the names of its ancestor, its name is MKIII (Third Generation).

“Then, within the <Familia>, everybody’s evaluation is completely different than Hephaestus’s and gave him an evaluation that isn’t great.”

“Eh? Why?”

Kami-sama changed the topic and I could not help but ask. She then nodded her head.

“In conclusion, it seems that he is able to create <Magic Sword>.”

"……!"

"It is not a fake, but a genuine <Magic Sword>. It was said that if it was created, it would already exceed the Magic Swords within the Familia……creations of a high ranked blacksmith. However, this talent matches the name <Crozzo's Magic Sword>.

——Magic Sword, Blacksmith.

The words that I have heard earlier seemed to finally have some sense of reality and it lingered inside my mind.

"But……wait, if it is a Magic Sword, then you must first learn the development ability <Blacksmith> in order to create it. He shouldn't be able to do it……?"

That's correct. When I first visited the <Hephaestus's Familia>'s shop, Eina-san had said it to me. I had remembered this point correctly.

Even if it was among the people who learned the <Blacksmith> ability, only a portion of the blacksmiths would be able to create Magic Swords.

"I am not too clear about this point, but it seems that he is really able to create it. Hephaestus also seems to think so."

"……If that's the case."

"Ahha, the surname Crozzo is genuine. He is definitely an offspring from <Crozzo>."

I felt an enormous shock.

Welf-san was born within a famous blacksmith family. Although it had already fallen, his origin was still considered to be a noble.

And he does not even have the <Blacksmith> development ability, yet he was able to create Magic Sword.

……<Skill>?

I suddenly thought that is it because he has a special skill that allowed him to create Magic Sword.

However, Lili had said, the <Crozzo> family, all of them are able to make Magic Sword……Could it be that they all have the same kind of skill?

Ah, if that is true……I could not help but have a headache.

Forget it, it is futile to excessively speculate.

I suppressed the emerging suspicions and focused on the conversation with Kami-sama.

“However, he did not make a Magic Sword.”

“……Eh?”

“I do not know why, but he did not make one. As long as he created one, his fame would rise, but he did not create one. So therefore, he is not even behind the high ranked blacksmith in terms of ranks, he is still so stubborn.”

Even though he can create a Magic Sword, he does not yet make one.

A Magic Sword that can release Magic——with similar effects—— just by swinging your hands is powerful. Although the amount of times is limited, it is still able to bestow beneficial Magic to anyone. No matter who, it can easily increase their strength.

It is a Magic Sword that countless people seek for.

It is a mysterious weapon that you would not have to worry about the number of customers or the selling price.

However, Welf-san did not make……?

“The shop that I work at were all sighing <A talented person whose ability was unrecognized>. The <Familia> members all use baseless rumors like <Trash Crozzo> to spite him.”

Because the Main God (Hephaestus) is disgusted about this behavior, nobody would dare to voice it openly. Kami-sama added.

……However, this kind of thing, even if they do not say it, they all know.

First let's not talk about the sighs from within the shops, the Familia members——Welf-san's blacksmith comrades were probably all jealous towards him.

Jealous of the talent that allows him to easily join the high ranked Blacksmith and the bloodline that allows him to create Magic Sword without any effort.

I finally understand why he was excluded by his <Familia>.

"His workmanship is genuine, but the blacksmith that you formed a contract with……has something to hide for a certain reason, probably because of what was mentioned earlier."

"……"

A hidden secret, is it……

Being able to create Magic Sword, Welf-san did not even say a single word about it to me.

However, I have only known him for only two days. In a normal situation, he would not tell everything about himself. It could be that he was not deliberately concealing it.

Thinking of his actions today, I think that this idea was correct.

"Bell-kun, if others are hiding a few things from you and you do not learn to accept it with a smile, that is not allowed, okay? Even if it is a God, they will still have a lot of things bothering them. You must become a broad-minded man."

"Kami-sama……"

Kami-sama gently looked at me and spoke with a kind tone.

Looking at her placing her hands onto the table and leaning her head, I relaxed and smiled.

And when she saw my dumb smile, she also could not help but smile.

“We really talked for a long time, let us eat quickly. Or is there something else you want to say?”

Kami-sama looked at the food that cooled down and said.

I hesitated for a moment, but I still spoke out the words.

About that the power (Skill) that was released at the end.

“You mean that your skill activated?”

“Yes……”

Just when I thought about the heroes that I longed for, the skill activated.

The part that is activated by the skill will have white-colored lights surrounding it and then the attack released from there……The Active Action’s effect would greatly increase.

Probably, how much of the effect would be strengthened would be determined by the degree of charging.

I told these things unreservedly to Kami-sama.

“……Bell-kun. Stand up and let me see your <Status>, okay?”

“Ah, o…okay.”

Kami-sama had a serious expression and I followed what she said.

I stood up from the chair and stood in front of Kami-sama. Then I removed the casual indoor wears.

Her gaze scanned across the skin that was engraved with the <Status>.

“……Ah.”

Following this, she placed a hand onto my back.

Without noticing, the location where the soft fingers drew upon produced bursts of heat.

Although I could not see, the pitch black <Sacred Text> seemed to be directly written into my mind.

I seemed to have seen an illusion ——<Hero’s Wish (Argonaut)>, these words were inscribed onto a stone tablet.

“It’s over.”

I slowly turned my head.

Kami-sama picked up the clothes on the chair and handed it to me.

“Although this is my own opinion, but your skill is a power that can change the situation.”

Kami-sama continued to maintain a posture of extending her hands and quietly said.

“This power is used to defeat an enemy stronger than yourself……No matter how much it looks to be a dead end, a possibility to overturn the situation. If I have to say it, it is a qualification.”

She looked up. Within those mysterious blue colored eyes, only my figure was reflected.

“This is because there is a child who idiotically longed to become a hero. It is a permit (Skill) that allows you to become a Hero.”

——Argonaut.

The story of a boy who dreams of becoming a hero.

His life's path of becoming his dream of a hero.

The road that leads to a hero.

"This is a desperate blow. It infused all the strength into it. In face of an unreasonable overwhelming force, using a single strike to complete reverse it."

Just like the heroes in the stories.

Kami-sama then continued to speak:

"The power you obtained is <A Strike of a Hero>."

After she finished speaking, silence enveloped the room.

I do not know why I was attracted to her eyes and the two of us continued to stare at each other. Until she used the clothes to hit me, I finally woke up and noticed the current situation.

I blushed and frantically wore my clothes. Kami-sama looked at my stricken expression from the side and finally smiled again.

The smile was different than the usual smile. It seemed to be more distant, more elegant. An illusory smile that seemed to be floating at a place where I could not reach.

It seemed to be a distant and kind smile that was guarding me from high up, the type as if she was watching her son.

This is the first time.

Whether physically or mentally, I was captivated by her.

I stood there transfixed and listened to her speak:

"It is fine if you remember it."

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“GAAHHHHHHHH!”

A roar sounded.

Kicking techniques with an amazing speed were thrown out and caused the Monster’s face, whose eyes had widened, to be destroyed beyond recognition.

The metal boots were stained with blood. Although the boots had already destroyed numerous monster skulls and it already seemed like it was washed with magma, the brilliance that was underneath did not disappear.

This pair of specially made metal boots were not originally made as a defensive gear to protect the foot, but it was more like a weapon. Right now, it was releasing its power without any mercy to the enemies in front.

“Bete, you’re in the way—! I won’t care if I cut you into two pieces!”

“Who would be cut by your blunt weapon!”

“Tione! Today’s meal will be wolf meat! UWAHH, seems like it is disgusting!?”

“I’ll kill you!?”

“……Idiot.”

The 44th Floor.
It is a Deep Floor area that was filled with heat and could cause one to faint in the dungeon.

The surrounding grounds were covered with red color as if it was about to burn and rugged rocks were everywhere.

All the walls that could be seen were filled with cracks and were black just like pieces of charcoal. The flashing red light beneath the cracks of the charcoal-colored walls made it even creepier.

Inside the illusion as if they were thrown into a volcano, <Loki's Familia>, who were in an <Expedition>, were currently fighting against the rock monster——<Flame Rock>, who launched a fierce battle.

"Why are those guys so excited?"

"Gareth."

The startled, deep voice had entered the <Loki's Familia>'s Captain——Finn's ears.

A dwarf walked over.

The dwarf sported a long beard. It could be seen that the muscles underneath the armor were like blocks of steel. The sturdy and heavy armor, equipped with a cape, and the axe that was easily equipped onto the body. This dignified and courageous posture seemed to be just like a battle-hardened warrior.

The dwarf called Gareth lifted his eyes, looked at Bete and the others, who were wrecking chaos, and quietly murmured:

"They were like this from the Middle Floors? This way, others cannot intervene. Look, Raul and the others are also troubled."

"Yes. Although this is bad, but it feels like it is impossible to stop……"

Right now, surrounding Bete was not just a large group of monsters, other members of his <Familia> were there. The Second-Class Lv.3 Adventurers, who were meant to be the core, were currently sweating against the higher grade First-Class Adventurer's battle posture.

Bete, Tione and Tiona. Looking at the ugly form of these three Adventurers stealing all the <Deep Floor>'s valuable <Experience Points>, even the Hobbit, Finn, who was crossing his arms and standing on top of a bulging rock, had an expression as if he wanted to sigh.

"Tione also seems to be revealing her true nature……Finn, what happened before you rendezvous with this old man?"

The Amazon sister, who would usually pretend to be calm because of her desired object (Finn)'s gaze, had a calm expression, but she slightly lifted the corner of her lips. Her ferocious fighting spirit flickered and at the same time, the Kukri Knife would flash through the scene. Her long black hair would also dance under the intense heat wave.

Lifting up the helmet, which covered vision, slightly, Gareth looked at Finn, who was standing on top of the rock.

"It seems like they were slightly stimulated by an Adventurer we met on the way."

"Ah? There is such an energetic person at the Middle Floors?"

"No, it's the Upper Floors."

"What?"

Following the rule of the <Expedition>, <Loki's Familia> would be divided, the team that entered later would be led by Gareth. As the last First-Class Adventurer of the <Loki's Familia>, he would enter the dungeon chasing after the lead group in case of any misfortune and would finally met up in the appointed floor. Thus, he did not know what Finn, who was in the lead group, saw.

Gareth's amber eyes slightly widened and he revealed a surprised expression.

"Although I think that someone brought it from the Middle Floors, a Minotaur appeared on the 9th floor. There, a single Lv.1 Adventurer defeated it by himself."
"A Lv.1 Adventurer defeated a Minotaur? No, wait, wait, how do you know the other person is a Lv.1?"

"We happened to have the opportunity to look at his <Status>, I confirmed it at that time. Mmm, the premise still has to be that Riveria's interpretation of the <Sacred Text> was correct."

"What, are you doubting my eyes, Finn?"

"Ohhh, Riveria, is it?"

A female elf came from behind——Riveria joined the duo's conversation.

Bright emerald color hair. The white skin that was exposed to the heat did not even have a single drop of sweat.

She was wearing beautiful blue clothes and she stopped in front of Finn and the others.

"Finn, as expected, I should still wear a robe next time. Even though an elf's skirt is equipment, wearing it is quite troublesome."

"Yes……It was difficult for Loki to buy it, could you please just settle for it?"

"Mmmm. It suits you."

"Once I think about that gaze licking around my entire body, I want to throw these clothes away……"

With cold eyes, Riveria looked down at the inadequate skirt. When her Main God gave it to her, she pleaded "Riveria, I beg you, please wear this!!"

Whether it is Finn or Gareth, both of them were wearing a similar colored sweatshirts underneath their armor. Just like Riveria, they do not feel hot at all.

This is because this equipment has the ——<Elf's Blessing> and would not be affected by the heat.

"Returning back to the topic, aside from me, Aizu is also a witness. That child also saw the back (Status) of Bell Cranel."

After Gareth listened to what was probably the Adventurer's name mentioned earlier, he lifted his eyebrow and move his line of sight from Riveria to Aizu, who was standing there quietly.

"……If what you said were true, is it only this old man who felt that Aizu would rush to the Monster at the first moment?"

"Ah? Why is that? Because she is too honest, I had accidentally forgot."

“What, don’t worry about her. She will recover soon enough.”

On the contrary of Finn’s surprised face, Riveria, who seemed to have realized something, had an expression similar to a wry smile.

Aizu nodded slightly as if she was thinking of something while she looked at the ground.

That expressionless face seemed to exude a troubled shadow.

“After listening to you guys, aside from this old man feeling suspicious……what did you feel after seeing that Adventurer?”

“He was fighting cluelessly, his weaknesses are obvious as well……But, how should I say it, I can also understand why Bete and the others are restless. That child made me remember that I, just like him, am first an Adventurer.”

The golden hair swayed as Finn tilted his head to look at Gareth. He revealed a child-like and gentle smile which matched his appearance. Riveria also felt the same and added:

“The responsibility of being charged with the task of commanding a <Familia>, we have already gotten too used to a protective battle to protect ourselves and the lives of our comrades. Compared to us, who fully considers all possibilities, that life and death battle——was slightly dazzling.”

“……I do not know why it felt like I did something quite regretful.”

After listening to everybody’s remarks, Gareth stroked his beard and regretfully sighed as he was not present at the scene.

At the end of sight, the three captains of the <Familia>, who were used to being cautious, looked at their young team members who were driven by the heat within their bodies as they continued to wreck chaos.

“……Riveria.”

“What is it, Aizu?”

After hearing the silent mutter that appeared, Riveria asked as if she had already expected it.

Aizu was silent for a moment, then she continued to speak:

“How do you think about surpassing……the ability’s limits?”

After Finn and Gareth, who were next to them, listened to the question, they revealed a surprised expression.

However, only Finn quickly noticed that there was something going on and he narrowed his eyes and stared at Aizu and the others.

“First, this is a territory that I cannot set my foot on. It is possible to allow the ability to reach the limit, but surpassing it is impossible.”

Riveria answered Aizu’s question.

If we were to use her, who was a magician, as an example, even if she could let her <Magic> which was related to the magic effects reach the highest rank S, it is still not possible to let <Strength> and <Endurance>, these two abilities which were extremely difficult for elves to improve greatly. Just like how academics and martial arts varies from one and another, everybody’s own ability range should have an established limit.

Reaching the peak was already difficult, let alone breaking the limit of the Grace granted by the Gods, Riveria concluded.

“Don’t think about stupid things, Aizu. Our physical and mental limits are determined by Levels.”

“……Yes.”

After being stared sharply by Riveria, Aizu became silent.

After a moment, as if she was standing in a daze earlier, she pulled out her sword.

The sharp blade left the sheath and cut apart the surrounding hot air.

Under Riveria's gaze, Aizu began to walk towards the battlefield.

"……Hey, Riveria."

"It's no use. The fire has been lit."

As if she was tired both physically and mentally because her child was not listening to her, Riveria suppressed her own urge to sigh and answered Gareth.

The pace that headed towards Bete and the others was clearly abnormal. The golden-colored hair continued to sway and the golden eyes were quietly burning. The girl placed her own beautiful appearance underneath an icy surface.

It was Aizu Wallenstein's other appearance.

It was unknown who made it up, the name of a <Valkyria>.

The girl who stubbornly pursued strength only wanted to invest her body and mind towards the battlefield.

(……I can still…become stronger.)

The mutters caused the heat in the dungeon to dissipate. Aizu flew towards the possibility that was mentioned.

Within the girl's eyes, the back of the boy, who surpassed the limits, still remained.

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Early in the morning.

It is around the time when the sun began to stick out its head from outside the dungeon walls.

I originally planned to explore the dungeon, but I was pulled away by Seal-san in front of the bar.

"Sorry, please wait a little longer! The food earlier was a failure……"

“About that, Seal-san, it is fine if you don’t force yourself……I was always being taken care of by you, today……”

“No, I will help you prepare it! So please accept it!”

Looking at Seal-san, who had an aggressive expression as she moved her face closer, I could not do anything other than nod and say “O…Okay”. Because she was embarrassed and had her entire face red, she hurried back into the bar.

Seal-san makes my bento every day. It seems like she had failed in the cooking process today. Because Seal-san would usually do things orderly, her appearance now was extremely rare. It made one have the urge to smile……What kind of taste would today’s lunch have? Although accepting this goodwill was a bit too much, the fear accompanied with cold sweat prevailed.

“Good morning, Cranel-san.”

“Ah, Ryu-san. Good morning.”

“We are extremely sorry for delaying your trip. That being said, Seal-san is also working hard……so please wait for a bit longer.”

Just when I was feeling bored, I heard the sound of the doorbell ring and Ryu-san came over to talk with me. Understanding her good intentions of hers for Seal-san, I smiled and said: “No problem.”

Ryu-san, who specially set aside her shop preparations, even stayed to chat with me.

“I see, so you found a party member safely.”

“Although it may only be temporary……”

A few days ago, I was asked once about the matter about my party members and successfully delivered good news to Ryu-san. After Ryu-san, who was wearing a waiter’s outfit and a white headband, listened, she asked:

“Cranel-san, is that person a trustworthy person?”

“Huh……?”

“No, sorry, I am not doubting you, but once you get involved with another <Familia> member joining your party, it is another story.”

Aside from personal problems, you will also have to pay attention to the background of the faction——Ryu-san used her pair of sky-blue eyes to look and say this to me.

I quickly realized that she was worried about me. On the day of the celebration, that person came forward and protected me, who was tangled with other Adventurers. Right now, she must be worried about me.

I felt happy for the sincere feelings of Ryu-san and replied:

“The other person is from the <Hephaestus’s Familia>, I think that there should not be any conflicts with my <Familia>. The two Gods seemed to have a good relationship.”

“Because <Hephaestus’s Familia> is a large organization, every individual has signed a contract for rights in the blacksmith shop. From this perspective, they are already extremely trustworthy. Although everybody said that it is extremely dangerous to have an interest-based relationship between <Familia>, <Hephaestus’s Familia> can be said to have set a clear boundary compared to those factions.

If it was only Welf-san, then naturally I would not be dissatisfied……Speaking of which.

I recalled the conversation I had with Kami-sama yesterday night, and after considering it for a while, as if I was observing Ryu-san’s reactions, I bit the bullet and told her Welf-san’s name. I also mixed in a little bit of action to explain that he was a blacksmith who was extremely good with his hands.

It feels that my thoughts were completely seen through by Ryu-san……

“Crozzo……”

After she listened to Welf-san’s surname, she stopped her actions and repeatedly muttered this surname.

Looking at Ryu-san's reactions, which would usually not be seen, my heartbeat increased.

"D…Do you know anything…….?"

"No, instead of saying that I know……the name <Crozzo> is a surname that a portion of the elves cannot ignore."

E…Elves?

I had heard information regarding about <Crozzo> in an unexpected way and did not know what to do.

"If it is possible, can you please tell me? I would like to know more about Welf-san……"

"……Okay. That being said, it is probably not the information you want to know."

After Ryu-san made a prologue, she began to tell the story.

"Surely you must know about the existence of <Crozzo's Magic Sword>, then do you know where they, as blacksmiths, perform their services?"

"No, I don't know."

"It is a country called Rakia. Among all the countries, it is a country close to Orario.

Rakia……Before coming to Orario, I had often heard of this name when I was still in the countryside.

Like how that country had declared a war again, or like how that country seemed to have started an expedition to somewhere.

"Rakia is a country that is governed by a single God's country-type <Familia>. In order to obtain status, the Crozzo family had delivered enormous amounts of <Magic Sword> to that god-dominated country."

Up to this point, it was basically the same as what Lili had said. I nodded my head.

“It was also due to the divine influence of the Main God who was known as a War God. In short, Rakia is an extreme militant country. Although their forces are currently dormant, but as long as the time is correct, they will start a battle with other countries and cities.”

(It really is like this……)

“Then after numerous battles in the past, the power of <Crozzo’s Magic Sword> was undoubtedly released without reserve.”

I feel that I was about to get to the core of the story and held my breath as I listened carefully.

“Cranel-san, can you imagine an army that even the soldiers are equipped with <Crozzo’s Magic Sword>?”

“……Could it be?”

“That’s correct. At that time, Rakia relied on the terrible firepower of the Magic Sword. It was an overwhelming firepower that could eliminate their enemies without any strategy.”

Winning battle after battle, zero losses, invincible. An undefeated myth.

It was said that the Rakia’s army, with the Magic Sword’s blessing, did not know when to stop their attacks.

“Rakia went too far. It was said that due to the improper use of the Magic Sword, it had caused the battlefield’s terrain to be completely changed into a barren scorched land…… Then that war had also spread to my fellow elves living in the forest.”

Although after the Gods descended to the Lower World, humans and demi-humans’ exchange have reached an unprecedented peak. However, there are still some people in the modern times that have closed thoughts.

One of the most serious example is the elves. Although it is only a portion of them, they, who have a strong pride, hated communicating with other races and seemed to have constructed a village within the depths of the forest and hid themselves.

So to say, in other words……

“The elves were driven out? Due to the war, they were driven out of the forest they lived in?”

“To be precise, it was burnt down. The entire forest including even the village.”

The village was burned down.

After hearing this sentence, I could not help but take a deep breath.

According to what happened after this matter, the elves that lost their village requested the help of a certain god……That is by accepting a <Grace> and belonging to that certain <Familia>, they eventually attacked Rakia.

At that time, Rakia had already lost the Magic Sword’s power and suffered enormous damage. The elves’ revenge also temporarily calmed down.

“The area that was indiscriminately damaged is where the soldiers were carrying Magic Swords. They hated the Magic Sword that was used by humans, and then hated the <Crozzo> family. Did they find the wrong target……As expected, many of them still could not lay down their hatred.”

“……”

“In other words, elves cannot ignore the name of <Crozzo> is due to this.”

“……Is Ryu-san the same?”

“No, not to that extent.”

I looked at Ryu-san, who replied straightforwardly, and was surprised.

It was said that the elves have extreme pride towards their own race, they should also be highly conscious of their elf comrades.

Although Ryu-san claimed that this was still something from the past and that the village was not directly burned down……About that, how should I put it, I could not suppress my surprised feelings.

There is no need to mention Seal-san and the others, but because she even cared about me, who she only met recently, I thought that she would cherish her own people.

“Bell-san, you’ve waited for a long time!”

“……It seems like it is time. Then Cranel-san, please be careful when you are exploring the dungeon.”

“Ah, okay……”

After Ryu-san noticed Seal-san coming out from the bar, she bowed her head towards me and said goodbye.

Towards her receding figure that seemed to have replaced Seal-san, I could only watch silently.

“It is slightly late……”

I slightly quickened my pace at the West Main Street area and headed forwards. The morning bell sound rang from the eastern side of the streets and the citizens were slowly appearing on the street. I held the feeling that I was going to be late and rushed towards Lili and the others, who were waiting for me at Babel.

My feet kept on moving, yet my thoughts flew to somewhere else. Inside my mind, I constantly chewed on the words that Ryu-san had said and did not realize in time the person who was approaching me directly.

“Oh, you really came.”

Ah, I slightly widened my eyes. The person who raised his hand and walked towards me was Welf-san.

I felt that it was a bit strange. Even though the meeting location was the same as yesterday……Or should I say, he specifically came to meet me?

“Yo, Bell. Good morning.”

“Ah, good morning. About that……Welf-san, why are you here?”

“Ahhh, Follower Lili had sent a message. It seems like she is unable to attend today’s dungeon exploration.”

“Eh!?”

It seems like when Welf-san was at Babel alone, Lili rushed over with amazing momentum and explained the situation. Because recently the shop was busy, the Gnome owner that Lili was living with had become fatigued. It seems like there is nobody else who could take care of him. Lili had bowed down and apologized several times.

Welf-san heard that I would be coming from West Main Street so he personally came over to tell me.

“What should we do, should the two of us go down to the dungeon?”

“Ah, Ah……”

If Lili, who was the Supporter, is not here, the Magic Stone and Drop Loot recovery will become slow. Having said that, if we do not explore, it will be an extremely free day today……This is what I wanted to avoid.

Since it is like this, do I have to do what I did when I was solo, carrying a backpack while being a part-time Supporter?

“……Bell, why don’t we do this, can you accompany me today?”

“Ah?”

After I heard Welf-san’s proposal, I tilted my head.

He slightly lifted his mouth and patted his own hands.

“Didn’t I say it before? I will completely remake your equipment.”

× × ×

“A…As expected, this light armor is enough, Welf-san……”

“There’s no need to be polite. A blacksmith will never go back on his words.”

I looked at the back of Welf-san, who continued to move forward, and revealed a troubled expression as I chased after him.

Although it was something he promised before, when he said again “Right now I will provide you your equipment free of charge”, my feelings of guilt continued to increase.

I wanted to reject it, but Welf-san continued to calmly insist “Leave it to me”, and walked openly in the streets with his black casual clothes.

“Bell, although it might be a little arrogant, but it would be better if you are a little bit greedy? Adventurers won’t know what they will become tomorrow. Even if it is for that time, then they should arm themselves in the best possible state, right?”

“Yes……”

It does make sense. He successfully shut me up.

There is no meaning once you died, this is what I have always heard from Eina-san.

I had made a promise with Kami-sama, to not let her become alone. Under this situation, I should say that saving is important……but I cannot mistaken what was most important, right?

I was slightly troubled for a while, then I finally accepted Welf-san’s good intentions.

I said this while I bowed down my head. Thus, Welf-san smiled and said: “No problem”.

“Then, Welf-san. Where are we heading to?”

“My <Workshop>”

Workshop? I asked and Welf-san explained it to me.

The so-called <Workshop> is the work room of Welf-san, who was a blacksmith. It seems like all the necessary smithing items and equipment were readily available and Welf-san would melt iron and create weapons there.

It was said that his <Familia> provided it to him……Providing every member with a workshop seems to be a privilege of the <Hephaestus’s Familia>.

“Even though it is a privilege, but it is not common to give everybody an individual workshop, right?”

“It is not common. A common workshop would be cheaper to build, and the work efficiency would also be higher.”

“Then why?”

“In order to not allow other blacksmiths to see their own techniques. Claiming that <Their own techniques belong to themselves>.”

This is the disposition of a craftsman……It can also be considered the modesty of a blacksmith?

The companions inside the <Familia> are all competitors. I instantly thought of this sentence.

“Don’t you think that we are gloomy or eccentric? Because this is all Hephaestus-sama’s policy.”

Welf-san half-jokingly said while his feet moved faster.

We are currently walking on the North-East Main Street area. I have never been here so I was thinking while looking around.

There were both big and small shops with roofs on the two sides of this large street. There were no bars, it seems like shops that specialize in tools were more conspicuous. The pedestrians were wearing all kinds of clothes and it made others feel that they were craftsmen. There seemed to be many citizens that were not affiliated or members of a <Familia> working. At the end of the street, there was a large building that was like a box……I could see several workshops.

Speaking of which, Orario's main source of income comes from manufactured Magic Stone products which seems to be created at this North-East Main Street?

Industrial Zone. This phrase immediately appeared inside my head.

"Turn at the next corner."

I had my attention captured by the dwarves, who were slowly walking while carrying thick logs, as I followed Welf-san.

Leaving the Main Street, we turned and entered a small path. The time was still early and the stone road that was not lit up by the sun's rays was slightly dark and cool. If you lift up your head, you would see a beautiful narrow sky.

The tall city walls seemed to be getting closer. Just when I wondering if we had to walk till the end of the city, Welf-san stopped.

"WAAA……."

After turning numerous times on the small road, I finally saw it.

A small, refined building.

Although the black stains all over the place were very eye-catching, it indeed gave off a feeling of a blacksmith's room! A chimney stuck out from the roof and it made me feel that it was a bit cute.

"You probably already knew, this area is the site for craftsmen. This kind of workshop or factory are all over the place. Our headquarters are also nearby."

I, who obviously was not aware of such things, could only utter “I…Is that so!” and began to observe the surroundings.

Welf-san’s workshop was slightly far from the Main Street. It was similar to the small alley that my headquarters were. The surroundings also felt somewhat dark.

Even if I don’t stick out my ears, I could still hear the sound of hammering……The sound of tempering metal echoed everywhere and I could immediately feel the presence of the blacksmiths.

After all, <Hephaestus’s Familia> seemed to have used this Industrial Zone and provided numerous workshops for their members.

Although it was still managed by themselves…… they were still extremely generous.

“Don’t just stand there, isn’t it time to head in?”

“Ah, okay.”

At the same time I muttered “Excuse Me”, I finally passed through the door of Welf-san’s workshop.

The first feeling I had was the strong smell of steel. Until Welf-san had opened the shutters and the interior brightened up, the previously dark interior finally revealed its original appearance.

Many iron tools were placed on the walls. Hammers, Scissors, in short, there were many. There were even tools that I have never seen before.

At the corner of the room was a large furnace, and beside it was a steel-built table. I remember that it was called an anvil?

Within this room that had no partitions, the tools and facilities used for smithing were placed in rows.

This is a true workplace for a blacksmith.

“Sorry, it is a bit dirty here. Could you please put up with it?”

“I…It’s fine! No problem!”

Rather, I would like to observe it even more……I felt excited while I shook my head.

With a wry smile, Welf-san brought a chair over and advised me to sit down.

“In short, you will only need to help with the sizing. Just leave the rest to me.”

“Sizing, is it?”

“Yes, it is similar to an order–made equipment. Since I have to make it anyways, why don’t I make an entire set of equipment that is specially for you.”

The equipment sold at the weapon shop were all made for unknown Adventurers, so many of the items have sizes that did not match. Although we could still adjust the errors, weapons and armor that was created for a person’s standard would indeed be the most.

“I want to make greaves, Bell, what do you think is better to be made?”

“Ah……About that……?”

“If you have any request for equipment, it is fine to say it out directly. For example, if you do not have a shield, you would feel uncomfortable or something similar……Right, if there is anything you want, you can still tell me.”

While having his back facing me, Welf-san spoke as he began to look at the various tools hanging on the wall.

I listened to the creaking sound while I was lost in thought.

If there were any requests, then it would probably be Daggers or light armor, right? Although it is not me being polite, but if you try to ask me what new equipment I want, I could not immediately think of it.

Ah……Although it is not a shield, should I try lightweight armors again?

(Ah, a Large Sword……)

Suddenly I noticed that there was a rack fixed at the corner of the workshop. There were many weapons hanging inside. It must be Welf-san's previous works.

I looked at the exceptionally large-sized weapons and recalled about the battle I had with the Minotaur.

"……Welf-san, about this, can't I use it?"

I seemed to have been attracted towards the rack and I stared at the Large Sword without a sheath.

There were no traces of decoration. It was simply used as a weapon. That silver, white sword blade clearly revealed this.

Just like thee armor that Welf-san had given me, it was a product that incorporated Welf-san's style.

"It is not that you can't……but this is an item that was returned as it wasn't sold?"

"But I want to try and use this."

I put it into my hand and seek for his consent. Welf-san's puzzled face slowly nodded.

I lifted the Large Sword into the air and grabbed the hilt. Then I let the blade that was originally pointing to the ground and spun it. A silver sheen appeared the moment I allowed it to point to the ceiling. I unintentionally laughed.

I continued to gently swing the sword. As expected, because there was quite a bit of weight, it is harder to wield than a Dagger.

"……"

"……? What is it?"

After I attempted to swing it twice, I noticed that Welf-san's actions stopped.

I asked and the corner of Welf-san's lips loosened.

“You don’t want a Magic Sword?”

Welf-san revealed an unadorned smile towards me.

“Eh?”

“Nothing. It is just that I did not believe that you do not want a Magic Sword, but the leftover sword.”

Standing in front of Welf-san, who was slightly happy, I muttered “Ah”.

Right, <Crozzo’s Magic Sword>……Just the workspace and the weapons have attracted my attention and caused me to completely forget about it. Once I thought about it, I panicked.

Just when I did not know how to react, Welf-san revealed a grin.

“Then, your Main God……What did Hestia-sama say about me?”

“!?”

“The employees working at Babel had told me. It seems like the young Goddess girl that was employed at the shop was investigating about me.”

In front of Welf-san, who pretentiously explained it to me, my expression worsened.

Could it be that the fact that Kami-sama snooping around was already exposed!?

“S…Sorry! Kami-sama did not mean to do anything bad, but more like she was worried about me, so she would investigate about Welf-san……As expected, it was still my fault!?”

“It does not matter. After all, her own member is forming a party with someone from another <Familia>. It is natural that she would worry.”

Welf-san does not seem to care and said: “Isn’t this a nice Main God?”

I felt at ease and sighed.

“I am slightly curious……After Bell knew about my matters, would your attitude change towards me. Sorry, I did something such as probing you.”

Welf-san revealed an apologetic, wry smile.

……In other words, he wanted to see if I would say the word <Magic Sword>?

Seeing if I would use Welf-san, who had the bloodline of the Magic Sword Blacksmith, to obtain a Magic Sword?

The surname <Crozzo> was famous, could it have made him a bit paranoid?

I wrestled with the meaning behind Welf-san’s words, I felt that it seems unbelievable.

“We left the main topic, let’s get back to business. Aside from the Large Sword, do you have anything else you want?”

“Ah, yes……about that.”

Because I was asked again, I began to consider it again. I thought that I should simply ask Welf-san to create a Short Sword while I wanted to use his past creations as reference, so I turned towards the direction of the rack.

Thus, my back was facing Welf-san.

“……I say, Bell. I am a bit curious, but is that a Drop Loot?”

“Eh? Ah.”

Welf-san pointed towards my waist. Aside from the <Goddess’s Dagger> and the <Dagger>, there was also the <Minotaur’s Horn>.

“This……That’s correct, this is a Drop Loot from the Minotaur……I do not know why, but it always seems like it is hard to let go of it.”

A sharp horn that was completely dyed with the color red. Although I do not want to only use it as a talisman, it feels that selling it would be the wrong choice.

……Perhaps it was because, whether it was the Monster or that battle, I did not want to easily neglect it.

At the very least, it allowed me to leave traces of myself.

Even if I was holding this item, it would not be possible to use it……

"……If that's the case, then do you want to use that?"

"Eh?"

"I am saying, to use that horn as the material to create equipment. Because it is a Drop Loot obtained from a Minotaur, it should be possible to utilize it as a weapon."

I widened my eyes.

This! If I have a direct contract with an exclusive blacksmith, then I could just pass the Drop Loot to him and directly create a weapon!

Welf-san's proposal sounded like a revelation. If that's the case, it would not be considered as if I was letting it go, but I would also not waste the Drop Loot that I had earned after working extremely hard. I bowed my headed deeply.

"P…Please!"

"Then we'll decide it just like this."

Since the problem of the material was successfully resolved, I handed the <Minotaur's Horn> to Welf-san.

After Welf-san seriously observed the Drop Loot, he used his hands to explore the surface.

"……A <Minotaur's Horn> is that red?"

"What?"

“N…No……Well, nothing is broken and the hardness is above average. If that’s the case, as long as I change the shape by grinding it, it can already be treated as a weapon……”

Welf-san passionately observed the <Minotaur’s Horn>.

He frowned and muttered. After a while, he lifted his head towards me.

“Bell. Can you leave the creation to me? I want to spend more effort on it.”

“P…Please. Since I am not a blacksmith, I do not have any good advice……”

“Sorry, it’s a big help. And then, if I use this Drop Loot to create a weapon, the things that can be created would be extremely limited……”

It can only create one Short Sword or a pair of Daggers.

This is what Welf-san seemed to have judged. This is the Menu of items that can be created from the <Minotaur’s Horn>.

Because it would be extremely thin if it was made into a Short Sword, Welf-san recommended the latter to me.

Let’s first not mention the <Goddess’s Dagger>, the <Dagger> that the guild had supplied to me……I feel that it is about time for it to be changed. The supplied weapon should be ranked at the lowest. I was also doubting whether it could be used for the next battle, which is the battle against the Middle Floor monsters.

Perhaps this was a good opportunity. I decided to let the weapon that had already been used for two months to retire.

Thus, I requested Welf-san to help me make a Dagger.

“Okay, I know. Anyways, this time I will first create a Dagger. The remaining materials, ah, let’s leave it as a surprise after I increase the <Blacksmith> ability.”

“Ahaha……”

I looked at Welf-san, who deliberately put on a proud expression, and smiled.

We immediately began to decide on the size. Welf-san kept on exchanging different tools that was inside a bucket as he continued to measure my size.

I do not know why, but the period when I removed my shoes to measure my foot size was something that had a deep impression on me.

“With this, it is finished. You can already head back.”

“About that, Welf-san, about this point……”

“Ah?”

“Can I look at the appearance of Welf-san working……?”

I looked at Welf-san, who was confirming my palm that I use to wield a weapon, and timidly asked.

Wanting to observe the scene of smithing. This is the truth. I was already extremely stimulated by my innocent curiosity when I was brought inside the workshop. My shoulders were restless and I was extremely interested about the coming scene.

After I had told Welf-san what I wanted to do without beating around the bush, he was slightly puzzled and smiled as he said: “What a strange person.” And allowed me observe.

I vowed that I would not disturb Welf-san’s work, but probably because of excitement, I could not help but my face heated up.

“Because the room will become extremely hot, it is best to take off your armor first.”

“Eh, Oh, okay.”

I did not understand the meaning of these words, but I still followed.

Welf-san help me place the light armor that I took off at the corner of the room. Just when I was left with a set of tight clothes, Welf-san walked towards the already prepared furnace……Then he began to prepare to light it up.

“W…What is that for?”

“Heating the Drop Loot”

“You have to burn the monster’s horn?”

Just when I said I would not disturb his work, I asked loudly from the side.

An animal’s horn. Isn’t it similar to bones? No, although I am not sure……but won’t that thing become tatters after being burnt……?

“Inside the monster’s horn and claws contains materials with metallic properties.”

“Metallic……?”

“Yes. Have you heard of <Adamantite>?”

“<Adamantite>……I seemed to have heard of it, yet I also don’t think I have heard of it.

Within my mind, I had an impression that it is a rare metal……

“Adamantite is an ore that can only be extracted inside the dungeon, it is the first-class material used for weapons. Its hardness is well-known.”

“I…It is only obtained from inside the dungeon?”

“Yes. It must be obtained from the walls that are able to give birth to Monsters. It is extremely rare. Although some people say it is possible to extract it at the Upper Floors, most of the time, it is brought back from the Lower or Deep Floors.”

Only extracted from the dungeon, meaning that it is only possible to get it in Orario.

The Adamantite seemed to be a specialty of the Labyrinth City, because it is a difficult to find ore, its value cannot be compared to Magic Stone.

"……Could it be that the monsters that were born from the dungeon also have the special properties of Adamantite……?"

"Oh, you're quite smart. It is just like that. However, compared to the original blocks of ore, the hardness will drop a notch.

If the monsters that were also nurtured by dungeon, it is not strange for them to reflect that metallic properties.

Although it is only a few Monsters, Welf-san told me that the teeth or claws, the so-called attack organs, would have metallic properties.

……So to speak, even that thick Large Sword was broken by this horn.

"The <Minotaur's Horn> also have the side effect of having metallic properties. In other words, as long as you heat it up, then you could directly work on it.

"I see". I expressed my understanding. In short, it is to heat up the <Minotaur's Horn> and process it……in other words, it is the preparations before smithing.

An image of a metal that was like a red colored candy after heating appeared in my mind.

Welf-san would probably refine the Drop Loot like he was smithing steel.

"Sorry, Bell. Can you help me open all the shutters and doors?"

"O…Okay."

Welf-san, who wrapped a towel on his head, said to me.

I followed his instructions and opened all the windows and doors.

Turning around, Welf-san was about to put the fire into the furnace. Using the Monster <Flame Rock>'s Flame Stone as the ignitor……Because the effects are too strong, it should not be sold to ordinary people.

"Although the Adamantite is the same, this guy's horn cannot be processed with ordinary heat."

Maintaining his posture of squinting his eyes at the furnace, Welf-san spoke.

In an instant, fire and heat suddenly scattered from within the furnace. The temperature of the room rose up exponentially. Even I, who was far away from the furnace, began to sweat from my forehead. This is the reason why he asked me to remove all my armor.

Then Welf-san was immersed in the work to adjust the furnace. I sat on the chair and observed his work appearance.

The time should be far away from noon. Because I had only split from Seal-san and the others not only an hour ago, there should be many Adventurers, who were lively as they head towards to explore the dungeon, at Babel.

Whether it was inside the house or the scene shown through the shutters, the alley was extremely dark.

The furnace that was gradually becoming red seemed to be somewhat mysterious.

Welf-san's serious expression was lit up by the flames quietly.

"You seem to have something that you want to ask."

"Eh!?"

"It does not matter, just ask what you want. I do not want to hide anything from a person whom I signed a contract with."

Sometime had already passed. Did it slightly come to an end? Welf-san lifted his face from the furnace.

I was shocked by his sudden phrase that hit the bull's eye.

Instead of saying that I wanted to ask, why not say I was concerned about it for a while. When I heard of Welf-san's situation, this tiny question was always lingering inside my heart. It seems like I have carelessly exposed it. To the extent that even he had noticed it.

Welf-san's surrounding atmosphere was extremely warm. His face had a shallow smile and his eyes were filled with trust……It gave this feeling to others. I swallowed and decided to step further into the Welf-san's inner world.

"Welf-san, why…do you not want to make Magic Sword?"

I recalled his happy expression when he had me as a customer.

As long as he was willing to create Magic Sword, a customer like me and money would be countless.

The Magic Weapon that would easily earn wealth and fame. The true skills of <Crozzo>.

I asked for the reason why Welf-san did not want to create a Magic Sword.

"Mmmm, there are various reasons……"

Welf-san's face emerged a wry smile and he turned his gaze back towards the furnace.

"I hate Magic Swords."

Then he declared a clear rejection towards Magic Sword.

"Actually, although my works are not sold, the amount of customers were once numerous……No, even right now, there are still many."

"Eh……"

“This is something that would simply make one angry. They will find my weapon at the weapon shop, see that there is a <Crozzo> signature on it and head towards my workshop. Saying <Please make me a Magic Sword!>”

Welf-san manipulated the tools below his legs to send air into the furnace while he spoke.

“They do not even look at my works. Magic Sword, Magic Sword, Magic Sword…… Aside from you, those people all mutter this word. I already knew that my own craftsmanship is still immature……But, you know? I just don’t feel happy about it.”

Looking at the bright red flames, Welf-san’s lips seemed to have showed a few wrinkles.

It was the world’s most terrifying Magic Sword that could even dry out an entire ocean. What the people sought after was <Crozzo’s Magic Sword>, and not Welf-san’s products.

The customers that come here, all of them are not looking at Welf-san himself……and instead could only see the value of the <Crozzo> bloodline?

Directed at the Magic Sword.

“Then, Welf-san……That means.”

“Mmmm, I had enough, I told them and said “You bunch of trash! Who would care about your commissions!” and severely rejected them.”

“Ha…Hahaha……”

I let out a dry laugh at Welf-san’s sentence, which followed my own. If it was like that, I could understand.

It was the resentment towards the people who do not appreciate his own works. No, it could be his resistance against the <Crozzo> blood that flows within his body.

I was able to understand. Although I was able to understand……yet.

“About that……Is that the only reason?”

I think that there was something else.

From within this person, who said he hated the Magic Sword, I could feel that there was a deeper meaning to it.

“……”

He did not immediately reply.

Welf-san, who turned his gaze away from the furnace, stood up and walked towards the table that held the <Minotaur’s Horn>. Welf-san held the chisel-like tool and hammer in his hand. He began the job of cutting down the Drop Loot.

When the huge thumping sound was about to reach 50 times, the <Minotaur’s Horn> finally broke. Welf-san took the slightly smaller half and sat once again in front of the furnace.

“Do you know why the Crozzo Family can create Magic Swords?”

Welf-san used the special scissors [12] that could be seen even from far away to grip the horn piece and placed it inside the already heated furnace.
I gazed at Welf-san, who was immersed in his work. “No……” I replied.

“Originally, Crozzo is a name of a boy. Later on, his descendants used it as a surname. We all call that boy as the first generation. It was something that appeared before the Gods descended to the Lower World.”

The time before the Gods descended to the Lower World was called <Ancient>. It was already thousands of years ago.

The origin of <Crozzo> was actually that old. Towards me, who did not say anything, I was extremely surprised.

“It seems like the first generation is a blacksmith who did not have many customers. Naturally, he did not create Magic Sword. Speaking of which, it is also true that the first generation had laid down the foundations for prosperity for the <Crozzo>.”

After an interval of a beat, Welf-san continued to speak:

“The first generation came forward and saved a certain race who was attacked by a Monster.”

“A certain race is referring to……”

“That is <Spirit>.”

——what, my voice echoed by itself above the floor.

Welf-san squinted at me, who had a shocked expression, and faintly continued:

“The first generation who suffered a grave injury seemed to have received help from the spirit and was saved. They cut their body and gave their own blood to the first generation.”

“T…Then, <Crozzo> is……?”

“That’s correct. They have the blood of Spirits.”

——Spirits.

Nymph, Spirits, Elemental……And the other names used to call them were Lower World residents. Compared to other races, their numbers are extremely rare. They are a mysterious existence.

<The beloved children of God>, <The Incarnation of God>.

There were various evaluations amongst the humans and demi-human. The only thing clear was that spirits were the closest race to the Gods.

“The first generation healed as if nothing happened after drinking the blood of the Spirit. It was literally a miraculous power. And then from now on, despite that the first generation was a human, he could also use Magic……And he could also make Magic Sword.”

The Spirit’s potential is overwhelming compared to the other races.

They are a Magic Race that is on par with the Elves. They are able to create fire, call out storms. Able to create a lake in the forest and could even refine gold, silver and gems.

They powers could be said to be equivalent to a demi-god.

In other words, they could bring forth a <Miracle>.

“Could it be…<Crozzo> is actually a Hero’s family…….?”

“Ahhh, that is impossible. Because no matter how good or bad the first generation was, it was said that he was a very ordinary person.”

In many stories, Spirits, especially in Hero’s Tales ——Many of the Hero’s Tales are not simply a creation, but actually used the truth as an origin, this was what my grandfather had told me——appeared numerous times.

The Spirits would use their miraculous powers to guide the heroes, occasionally help them out and push them to complete their mission.

Specifically, it was just like how Welf-san had said it. Granting them the power of Magic or a powerful weapon. There should also be Spirits who turn themselves into weapons. [13]
The power of the Spirits and the Heroes’ Achievements are usually interlinked and would also contribute greatly.

If it was when the Gods have not yet descended to the Lower World, it could be said that their blessing is essentially a proxy version of <God’s Grace>.

“The blood of the first generation, which even extends life, is also because the Spirit’s power still remains up to this day. There is also a testimony from a God in Heaven, who looks over everything, that we are the first generation offspring.”

Since the Gods have descended to the Lower World, the Spirits, who usually would not have any contact with the outside world, began to appear. Aren’t the Spirits overly casual? It seems like they are quite unsure with themselves. Aside from that part, almost all of it had not changed.

The Gnome race fares rather well with us. They, who had an elderly appearance, relies on their skills in processing precious metal and gems, silently support our life.

Although beside of the trend of God's Grace, the Spirits were not as valuable as before, but they still tend to be a mysterious existence. To the extent that they are longed for in every sense by humans and demi-humans.

"But even if within their body flows the Spirits' blood, the Spirits power never had a significant impact on the first generation's offspring……Then, a few generations ago, when the <Crozzo> was granted a <Grace>, that was obtained."

"……Skill?"

"Yes. Only to create a Magic Sword. Most of the people in the family all unconditionally learned the same skill."

Using the <Status> as a catalyst, the sleeping possibility within the <Crozzo> lineage was awakened.

Crossing over generations, it was the moment where the Spirit's power was once again awakened.

"Then the rest is the same as what Follower Lili had said. <Crozzo> sold Magic Swords that were several times stronger to Rakia."

Welf-san also continued to speak, it was at that time, they become a member of the kingdom.

In conclusion, it was because the first generation Crozzo was granted the Spirits before, and could create Magic Sword before the <God's Grace>. Then, <Crozzo> was called the Magic Sword Blacksmith Family……The people who have this bloodline could create power Magic Sword because Spirit's blood flows inside their body.

Crozzo's foundation for their prosperity is because of the quality of their blood.

"It was said that after they earned their position, they began to act as they please. Thanks to the Magic Sword that our family made, the kingdom had never lost in a

war. Sounds of praises and compliments came nonstop from the royal family. We were immersed in food and wine every day……We also did not know what dreams we had for a blacksmith to learn to become a noble.”

Welf-san said with a self-depreciating tone while he looked at the burning fire inside the furnace.

The conversation was interrupted.

For a long period of time, only the sound of the flames could be heard inside the workshop.

“……<Crozzo> began to become arrogant. They forgot about the blood that flows inside their body and mistakenly believe that the power of Magic Sword was their own power……For their own desires, they began to mass produce the Magic Sword.”

——so that’s why they were cursed.

Welf-san clearly said it.

“The kingdom that <Crozzo> served……The country had wrecked chaos during the battle and finally earned the resentment from the elves that got their village burnt down……”

“T…This I know.”

“They not only earned the resentment from elves. They even earned the resentment of Spirits, which granted blood to the first generation.”

“!?”

“Spirits prefer to live in naturally rich lands. The mountain collapsed, the lake dried up, the forest was burnt……Just like the elves that had lost their village, the Spirits were also chased out of their home.”

I had heard this from Ryu-san, the relationship between Crozzo and elves.

By returning kindness with ingratitude, the Spirits also had something important stolen away by <Crozzo's Magic Sword>.

"The elves' resentment was directed towards the country. Then the Spirits' anger was directed towards the Magic Sword and <Crozzo>."

"……"

"During a certain battle, all the Magic Swords at the front lines all broke without warning. Before they were used, they all crumbled to powder. The Kingdom army that naturally relied on the Magic Sword suffered a heavy defeat in that battle."

"Is that the Spirit's doing?"

"It must be. At the same time, <Crozzo> are all unable to create Magic Sword. The family was cursed by the Spirits."

Saying that they were cursed, so that's what it was all about……?

I unconsciously tightened my shoulders.

"Afterwards, the Kingdom continued to lose. <Crozzo>, who was already useless, was forced to bear the responsibility of the defeat and had their status striped away. This is the so-called fallen noble. When I was born, my family was completely ruined."

From heaven to hell. Although this could be said as retribution……

So this is the story related with the current fallen <Crozzo> family.

Huh, but wait……?

"Then, isn't it that <Crozzo> is not able to create Magic Swords? But Welf-san said that you are able to create Magic Sword……?"

"Yes. If it is me, then I can make it. Although I do not know why."

Is it because the curse had already disappeared, or was it because the Spirits have calmed down, or was it because it was Welf-san?

Although I do not know the reason, but it seems that Welf-san is the only one who can create <Crozzo's Magic Sword> in his family.

But Welf-san ignored the <Crozzo> family's obstruction and left his home……It was said that when he was wandering aimlessly, he was picked up by Hephaestus-sama.

"Although it is to revive my family, I am still grateful to my father and grandfather, who instilled smithing techniques into me. Because of them, I am able to experience the pleasure of using my own hands to create weapons."

The surrounding temperature had increased again. The perception of time had already become extremely ambiguous. At this moment, Welf-san took the Drop Loot from the furnace and moved it to the anvil.

Although you could still see the original shape, the <Minotaur's Horn> was already so red that it was going to melt quickly.

"Inside the workshop that was filled with coal and the smell of rust, I did not hate it when I was standing next to my father and grandfather while doing the work of an assistant."

Once he recalled the feelings when he first hit steel, his voice showed such emotions.

I do not know why it was mixed with a little bit of sadness.

"However……when my father knew I had the talent, in order to revive <Crozzo>'s glory, he forcibly asked me to make a Magic Sword."

Welf-san held a hammer in one hand and took some time to breathe.

Then, he lifted his eyes and his mouth began a single lin.

This was the first time that I saw Welf-san's expression as a blacksmith.

My breathing instantly stopped.

"……He accidently let it slip that he wanted me to make a tool that would make us rise to the royal family."

Then, Welf-san grasp the hammer and swung the hammer downwards in one go.

“That’s not it, it isn’t like that, a weapon.”

The ferocious sound of metal striking marks the beginning of refining.

As if he wanted to instill the feelings he had inside his heart, Welf-san swung the hammer.

“It is not a tool for political purposes, nor a method to climb up. A weapon is half of the life of the user.”

Although Welf-san’s striking sound was separated by a small margin, the striking sound was extremely loud to the extent that it was shocking.

Through the correction capacity of the ability <Strength>, every hit contains a power that could not be compared with common people.

“Even when a user would face an overwhelming situation, only a weapon cannot betray him. When you grasp the handle of the weapon, this guy and the user should already have the same body and heart.

Was it because of the difference in strength, but the location of the hammer differs every time when it falls down.

Sometimes it was a loud metallic sound which seems to be stretched, sometimes it is a subtle sound as if it was fixing.

There was no need to assist. You could see with the naked eye that the red colored metal piece was changing shape.

“And blacksmiths must create this kind of weapon.”

Instilling the passion to the weapon. It was as if Welf-san had turned into flames.

The overwhelming sincerity and unwavering thoughts.

“Using the extreme fiery passion to reach the ultimate confrontation of strength and iron. When we directly confront the iron, we are finally able to create a weapon. How can we deceive this fact, how can we rely on our blood to make swords, how can we…forget the essence of smithing?”

He concentrated and hit the iron.

His entire body exuded a ghostly aura as if he was being possessed.

Welf-san, through that metal that was burning red, what did you see?

“I hate Magic Sword. I hate that it will absolutely break, the Magic Sword that will eventually leave the user by themselves.”

Flying sparks. Crimson flashes.

Every time the hammer hit the Drop Loot, the burning metal fragments would bounce. It was nowhere inferior to an Adventurer’s armor, the black colored kimono that Welf-san was wearing would rebound the metallic debris and let it fall down on the ground.

Then I noticed it.

The tattered-like clothes this person was wearing was actually his work clothes.

These clothes were scorched black and had an old appearance. It is the evidence that it had experience numerous smithing operations.

“I….hate Magic Sword. Its power would corrupt people’s heart. Whether it is the user’s modesty or a blacksmith’s pride, it will consume everything. At least, the swords that we (Crozzo) created was like that.”

Causing a blacksmith family to fall, the extremely powerful Magic Sword.

<The Cursed Magic Sword Blacksmith>.

I seem to have understand the true meaning of this word.

“I will not create a Magic Sword. Even if I create one, I will not sell it.”

Ignoring the sweat flowing down his cheeks, Welf-san lifted the hammer again.

The striking sound continued. Without the slightest break, the fiery collision melody enveloped this small workshop.

Looking at Welf-san like this, I even forgot to wipe my sweat.

It was the smell of iron that I had felt when I entered this room.

It was a smell that was so strong that it made me want to cover my nose, but now it had escaped far away from me.

Welf-san only looked forward. Again and again, he swung down the hammer in his hand.

× × ×

Looking outside from the shutters, the outside was already dyed in the darkness of dusk. It had already begun to become dark.

Welf-san's job also entered the final stages.

"……Completed."

"UWAH……!"

Walking out from within the depths of his workshop, Welf-san used both hands to place the box onto the table.

I leaned forward to peek inside the box. Inside, there was a dagger shining with a crimson glow.

A transparent-like, sharp blade. Its length was slightly shorter than even the <Goddess's Dagger>. From the bright colors, you could see the shadow of a <Minotaur's Horn>.

The dagger hilt and blade was close to a red copper color. It was probably adjusted according to my palm.

"T…This…Isn't it amazing……!?"

"Probably because the material was extremely good. Among all my works so far, it is undoubtedly the best."

While revealing fatigue, Welf-san happily curved his eyes and smiled while revealing his smile.

Although it was a bit modest, even Welf-san, himself, felt that his work this time was successful. Otherwise, I feel that he would not say <The best> or something similar.

I excited bowed towards Welf-san again and again.

“Ah, sorry. I did not have time to prepare a sheath for you. I will make one for you tomorrow, so why not just take a random one and improvise with it?”

“I…It doesn’t matter. Rather, it is fine if you do not make it tomorrow……You already worked until so late today.”

“No, it is better to get everything done when it’s still hot.”

<Iron is also the same>. Welf-san turned around while saying this.

<Just like a blacksmith>, I thought, <No, he is a true blacksmith>, I could not help but smile at my own thoughts.

Are all the artisans the same as Welf-san, I smiled while I thought of this.

“Okay, let’s give it a name.”

While thinking of that sort of thing and could not stop smiling, Welf-san, who was beside me, leaned forward to take glance and stared at the crimson dagger.

He rested his chin on his right hand and narrowed his eyes.

Releasing an incredible concentration, Welf-san slowly muttered:

“Ushiwakamaru……No, Mino-tan.”

“Nonononononononononononono!? Isn’t the first one fine!?”

“Ah? Bell thinks that Ushiwakamaru is better?”

“There is no need to hesitate!?”

I, who was turning pale, directed a roar with enormous momentum towards Welf-san.

Because I desperately pleaded, with a regretful voice, Welf-san said “Is that so” and reluctantly agreed.

“Then, take it.”

“Okay. I really appreciate it, Welf-san.”

Temporarily borrow the sheath of other creations, Welf-san handed the dagger to me with one hand.

I thanked Welf-san again and extended my hand……*Hyoi*, the dagger was raised up. I looked at the hand that rushed into the empty space and, “Eh?”, revealed a confused expression.

“That.”

“W…What?”

“Get rid of your rigid speaking style.”

I listened to his words and widened my eyes.

“I have just met you a while ago, so it would not let you fully trust me. However, please treat me the same as Follower Lili and casually talk with me.”

Just like a comrade, Welf-san……No, Welf said this and smiled.

I smiled while I answered:

“I understand, Welf.”

He handed over the dagger and I earnestly accepted it.

## Epilogue
# The Next Stage

Today, in the bustling guild headquarters, there were also numerous Adventurers walking around in the large hall.
Sounds of the footsteps and voices mixed together did not spread to the corner of the large hall's meeting rooms.

Inside the room that had soundproof equipment, Bell and Eina was sitting on opposite sides of the table.

"Crozzo? That…If I'm wrong, then I'm sorry? That blacksmith noble……?"

"Yes……As expected, he is a famous person?"

"Yes, it is like this. Adventurers and people in the vicinity would immediately think of that family when they hear the word, Crozzo."

A week after he had obtained the newly created dagger, Bell reported the matter about Welf to Eina. Including that he had formed a direct contract with this new blacksmith comrade. It is a problem person with a lot of controversy again. From Eina's face emerged a wry smile.

"But, it was really surprising."

"Eh?"

"The fact that Crozzo is at Orario. Normally, his reputation would quickly spread throughout the city. As a matchless Magic Sword blacksmith."

"……"

The reason why Welf-san's reputation did not spread is because he continued to reject the request of his customers to create Magic Swords.

Simply put, Welf would not be recognized as a <Crozzo> if he does not make a real Magic Sword. Regardless if they knew he was in <Hephaestus's Familia>, the customers who did not know anything would see Welf as a fake Crozzo.

<A Crozzo who can't make Magic Sword is trash>. A portion of the customers who found Welf would often say it. Thus, his reputation had been buried.

Although I cannot blame Eina……I have personally recognized the truth about using the Magic Sword to judge Welf's value. I would also feel slightly depressed about it.

"Sorry, then about the thing just now."

"Ah, er……Then, can you let me see it today again?"

Bell changed his thoughts and cut to the chase.

Eina, who seemed to panic slightly, could not hide her stiff expression and stood up from the seat.

Bell also stood up, turned his back towards her and removed the armor and clothes.

Bell Cranel

Lv. 2

Strength: G267 Endurance: H144 Dexterity: G288 Agility: F375 Magic: H189

Luck: I

"……"

After confirming Bell's <Status>, Eina opened her petite lips and closed it again.

Ten days had passed since he became a Lv.2. Nevertheless, his highest ability value had already reached F. It had gone up 3 ranks from I.

How much do you want to skip the process until you are satisfied?

Bell, who had redressed with his clothes, sat back onto his seat and leaned slightly towards Eina.

“The team has already become a three-man party. If that’s the case, can we go to the Middle Floors?”

The gaze contained a blazing will. In front of those crimson eyes that would make you gasp, Eina slowly closed her eyes.

The beginning of the Middle Floors, the 13th to 14th Floor’s basic ability requirement was I to H. In other words, Bell had already fulfilled the next floor’s safety requirement.
The Lv.1 vanguard-type blacksmith and the poor <Status> Supporter. With Bell’s power that stands out, it was a party filled with irregularities. Although saying that, the 13th Floor monster encounters did not have a significant gap in strength compared to the 12th floor. With <Hard Armored> in the lead, monsters like that would also appear at the Middle Floors.
If Bell’s support could be put into place, then there would be no danger of being completely annihilated.

It was a party rating that would just be barely allowed into the Middle Floors.

“……Wait a while for me.”

Eina, who widened her eyes, temporarily left the room.

Bell temporarily was by himself for a while, but she soon came back. In her hands, she was holding three papers that were the length of a train ticket.

“Bell-kun, take this.”

“This……”

“A coupon for <Salamander’s Wool>. If you take this to Babel, you will get some discount.”

Towards Bell’s expression as if he did not understand the situation, Eina explained:

“I permit you to enter the Middle Floors. But there is a requirement. You must prepare <Salamander’s Wool> for your entire party.”

“S…Salamander’s Wool?”

“It is a Spirit’s charm. Listen carefully, if you do not equip this, then you absolutely cannot go! Do you understand!?”

“O…Okay!?”

Under Eina’s pressure as she raised a finger and leaned over the table, Bell frantically replied.

She, as a half-elf, raised her slim eyebrows, exhaled out and returned back to her seat.

“Bell-kun, being reckless is prohibited. If it is dangerous, then you must return immediately. Promise?”

“……Okay.”

As he was being watched by her emerald-colored eyes, Bell nodded.

From Eina, Bell realized that there was tension regarding this uncharted territory, the Middle Floors.

It would be good to bear in mind her words.

“Then good luck.”

It was once again her usual drooping eyebrows, yet it was a beautiful smile.

Etching that smile into his eyes, Bell and his companions began to embark to the dungeon.

× × ×

“RUGYAAA!?”

The crimson slash caused the <Silverback> to enter a state where it could not fight.

What released that slashing attack was the red-colored dagger held by his left hand. The blade released a burning-like sheen and drew a red trajectory inside the mist of the dungeon.

Heading towards the new monsters that continuously performed sneak attacks from the depths of the mist, Bell, this time, used the <Hestia's Dagger> in his right hand to fight back.

"Take this!"

"GUEEEEE!?"

Using a speed surpassing a Lv.1 to obtain the first move: a high speed counterattack.

The <Imp> that was cut down screamed as it rolled on the grasslands.

"The mist is going to scatter!"

Inside a mist incomparable to the one on the 10th floor, Bell heard the voice of the nearby Lili.
Their location was their destination on the 12th floor. It was also the staircase that connected to the 13th floor.
Within the square-shaped room, only half of it contained mist. Once you pass through the boundary, things that obscure vision would disappear.

Lili of the Hobbit race, which had good vision, concluded that the destination was near.

While collaborating with Welf in order to make sure that we would not separate, she ran across the grassland.

"!"

Just when the mist seemed to sway like smoke, the line of sight brightened.

In front of Bell's eyes were groups of monsters that dispersed throughout the room and a rocky wall at the depths of the dungeon.

Although the surrounding walls was a thick wooden color, only that place was made up with grey rocks. In the center of the wall, a huge hole abruptly opened up.

——that was it!

The entrance that led to the Middle Floors.

His heart, *badump badump,* drummed on his chest.
"Fuuu!"

Bell left Lili and Welf behind and attacked first.

Heading towards the group of mounters that issued threatening sounds, Bell released a surprise attack using his <Agility>.

"——!?"

The red-colored dagger used one attack to turn the <Hard Armored> into ashes.

He aimed for the position slightly lower than its chest, however, the impact spread. The Magic Stone immediately shattered.

<Ushiwakamaru>.

A single-edged knife whose blade width was at around 15 centimeters. A unique weapon that Welf used a Minotaur's Horn to create. It was different than <Hestia's Dagger>'s sharpness, which would easily cut through iron. <Ushiwakamaru> had amazing destructive power.

Violet and Crimson, two types of blade light.

By using these two high-power weapon effectively, Bell continued to pile up corpses of monsters.

"Your appearance when using it seems to be pretty good……!"

“HIGAA!?”

Welf looked at Bell, who was going on a rampage with his own creation, and revealed a smile. Then he casually used his Long Sword that was on his shoulders to cut at the Monsters. And cut down two Imps simultaneously that Bell had missed.

“OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!”

“It’s coming……!”

It was a huge body that was rushing over as it shook the ground.

Facing the Orc that was equipped with a natural weapon, dead wood, Welf intended to engage.

“——KIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!”

But just when Welf planned on running towards the Orc, a severe sharp sound assaulted him.

The source of the sound was in the sky, the flying <Bad Bat>.

Due to the highly lethal sound wave from the bat monster, Welf’s sense of balance was instantly destroyed.

Towards him, who had nearly fallen to his knees, the Orc did not care, continued forward, and lifted up the super-thick wooden club.

“Welf-san!?”

“!”

Hearing Lili’s cries, Bell also noticed Welf’s crisis.

At the same time, as he grasped the situation, Bell reacted instantaneously. Because Welf was blocking the path towards the Orc from him, he could not use <Fire Bolt>.

Bell quickly made his judgment.

Like a bullet, he ran through the path with the shortest distance.

“Lili, Large Sword!”

Bell shouted.

Just by these actions, Lili understood what Bell was planning to do.

At the same time, she jumped lightly, Lili placed her hands behind her body and touched the Large Sword that was outside of the backpack.

After it was possible to open the button to take out the sword, Lili also operated the side of the strap to let the hilt stand out. The petite body and the Large Sword formed a beautiful cross.

After Lili’s body entered the predicted route of the boy, she turned so that her back was facing him.

Then, Bell saw Lili as the sword sheath, *Shing*, he pulled out the silver-colored Large Sword.
“————!!”

A full-powered acceleration.

Towards the Orc that was about to give the final bow to Welf, he attacked with all his strength.

“OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!”

“AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!”

Compared to the monster’s sweeping attack, Bell released a diagonal slash.

The thick Large Sword flew at the wooden club and smashed it apart.

“BUBUEE!?”

A frantic cry.

The Orc's eyes were filled with fear as its prideful strength's attack actually failed.

Bell used the acceleration force to release a full-powered slash and beat the Orc's monster-like strength.

Swiftly, Welf, who had regained freedom of his body, flew above Bell's head and with a horizontal flash, the Orc's head was cut apart by the Long Sword.

"……Ah—, sorry."

"No……After all, we are companions."

Looking at Welf scratch his head, Bell could only smile awkwardly.

Welf widened his eyes and broke into a smile.

Then, you could only hear a *supa* sound.
It was the crisp sound from the arrow that Lili had fired as it hit the Bad Bat.

"Then, let's do our final meeting."

After Bell and the others cleaned up the monsters inside the room, they sat down on the floor in a small circle.

In front of the fragmented rocky walls on the grassland, Lili drew a simple diagram and began to speak:

"Just as usual, we would need to arrange the formation after entering the Middle Floor. First, the vanguard would be Welf-sama."

"Can I do it?"

"It is better to say that aside from this part, there is no other location that Welf-sama would win at. Ah no, Lili is not saying that she is great……Sorry, I'll continue."

There were three circles that were side by side, Lili used a dagger and pierced the center one.

“Bell-sama will be the middle defender and is responsible for Welf-sama’s support. Because it needs to take into consideration both offensive and defensive situations, so the burden is also the highest……Is that okay?”

“Yes, there’s no need to worry.”

Looking at Bell, who nodded, Lili pointed at the final circle and said: “Using the elimination method, Lili will be the rearguard.”

“Although I feel that you should already know, but this small party is extremely unstable. Because when you select a Supporter as the rearguard, it is inevitable that there will be insufficient firepower. So please understand that when we are in a difficult situation, it will be extremely difficult to make a comeback.”

“Just a single misjudgment could lose our lives? How strict.”

“Do you want to pick up our tails and head back? If it is now, we can still make it?”

“What kind of nonsense are you saying? I need to become a high-ranked blacksmith as soon as possible. Who would turn around and run away when there is a shortcut in front?”

Bell could only watch dumbfounded at the already accustomed interaction of Lili and Welf.

Listen to this casual conversation, Bell suddenly noticed that the two of them were turning over to look at him.

“What are you laughing at?”

“Uh……I’m laughing?”

“Yes, you are laughing obscenely……Bell-sama, are you lacking a sense of nervousness?”

Placing my hand onto my cheeks, indeed, my cheeks had relaxed.

Bell hurried to apologize.

“Just forget about the apology, but why did you laugh? I am curious.”

“Uh, about that……it must be because it is great to be lively……It had become similar to a party so I was happy.”

Bell, whose face became red, turned his gaze towards the ground and then once again looked at the interactions of Lili and Welf.

“And shouldn’t you become excited? Everybody working together to go on an Adventure.”

While his face was still red, Bell excitedly smiled.

This was the finest taste of this career, Adventurer.

Stepping into an uncharted area, working together to constantly discover new things.

The excitement of unknown, helping each other and share the joy……It was truly something that was exciting.

Adventurers cannot forget about the teachings of Adventures. The crimson eyes seemed to match the age of the boy as it shined.

“……Ku…Hahahahaha! That’s right, just like that, it is indeed something exciting! If you are not excited, then you are not a man!”

“Although Lili finds it difficult to agree with……But I understand Bell-sama’s feelings.”

After looking at the others’ faces, Welf let out a huge laugh and Lili also revealed a wry smile, but the corner of her eyes had loosen so it seemed like a slight smile.

Bell, who did not know why he was excited, revealed a smile following his emotions.

“Then, are you ready?”

“Ahhh, no problem. Let’s go.”

“Yes.”

The three of them stood side by side and approached the rocky wall with the open hole.

At the pitched-black entrance that lead towards the Middle Floors, the uneven rocky surface extended to the other side of the path and in the depths, a dim light was quivering.

There was a bit of a rocky smell and moist air. It evoked a terror that could not be dissipated with just words. Beyond this, there are uncovered, violent monsters.

Bell clenched his fists slightly to suppress the sudden goosebumps that appeared and intensely gazed towards the depths of the dungeon.

(……There’s no problem.)

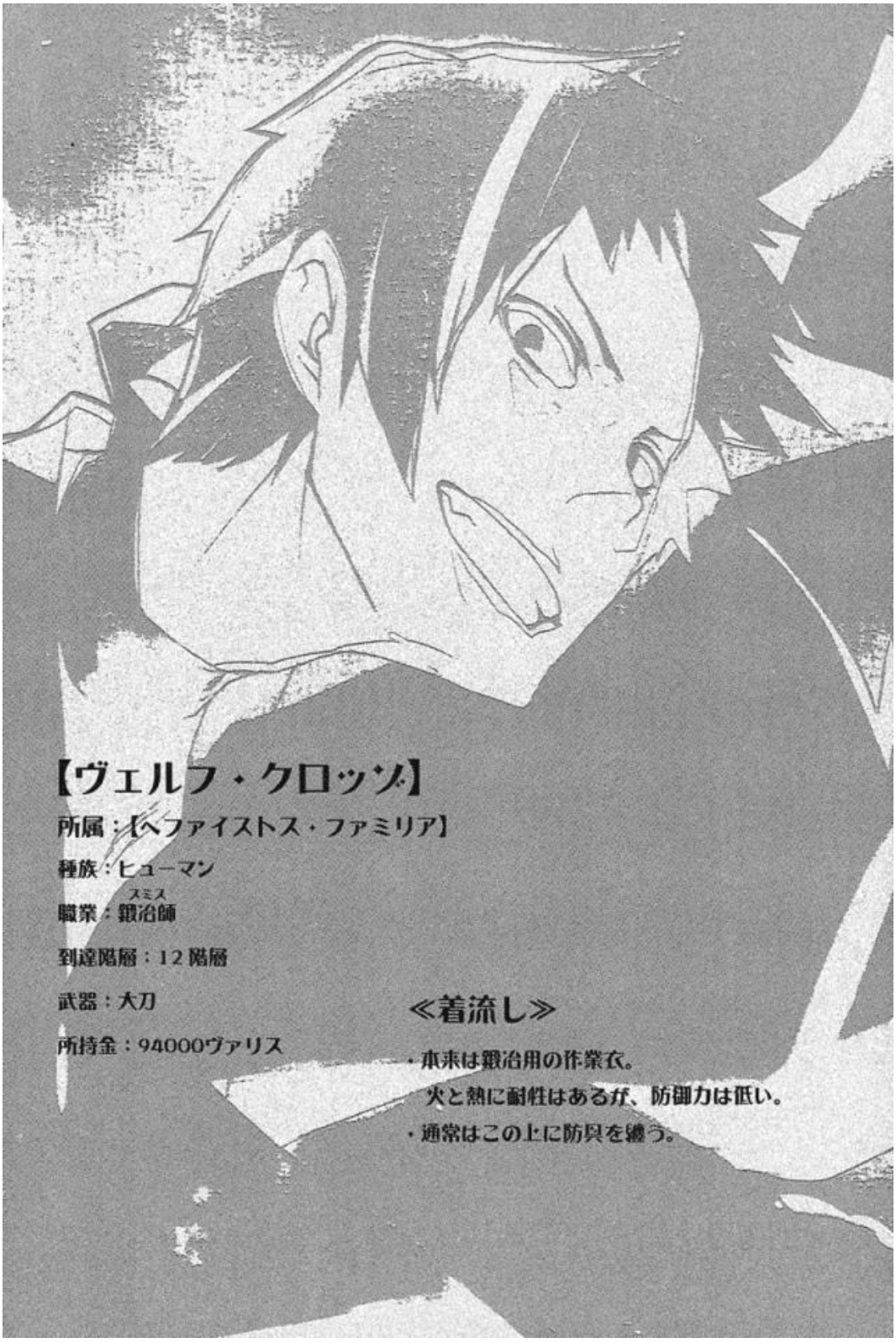
I am not by myself. Although we are from a different family[14], I still have reliable comrades.
Then, sure enough, we can overcome anything.

Bell thought like this.

(……Okay!)

Inside the depths of his heart that acted as the source of his thoughts was a golden aspiration.

Bell headed towards the Middle Floor.



【ヴェルフ・クロッゾ】

所属：【ヘファイストス・ファミリア】

種族：ヒューマン

職業：鍛冶師（スミス）

到達階層：12階層

武器：大刀

所持金：94000ヴァリス

≪着流し≫

・本来は鍛冶用の作業衣。
火と熱に耐性はあるが、防御力は低い。

・通常はこの上に防具を纏う。

<Welf Crozzo>

Affiliation: <Hephaestus's Familia>

Race: Human

Class: Blacksmith

Achieved Floor: 12th Floor
Weapon: Long Sword

Money:  94000 Varisu

<Kimono>

- It was originally work clothes to be used while smithing.

Although it has some resistance to fire and heat properties, its defense is low.

- Normally, you would wear other armor on top of these clothes.

## ステイタス

Lv. 1

力：[ 617　耐久：[ 521　器用：[ 645　敏捷：[ 509　魔力：| 70

《魔法》

【ウィル・オ・ウィスプ】
アンチ・マジック・ファイア
・対魔力魔法
・詠唱式【燃えつきろ、外法の業】

《スキル》

【魔剣血統】
クロッゾ・ブラッド
・魔剣作製可能。
・作製時における魔剣能力強化。

## ≪大刀≫

・幅広の片刃。大型。
・ヴェルフ自作。上層ならば十分まかり通る威力。
・自分専用の武器なので、固有名はなし。
　他者のための武器でなければヴェルフは題名をつけることはしない。

Status

Lv. 1

Strength: C617 Endurance: D521 Dexterity: C645 Agility: D509 Magic: I70

<Magic>

[Will-O-Wisp] [15]
- Anti-Magic Magic
- Activation Chant <Burn, Sotonori no go>

<Skill>

[Magic Sword Bloodline (Crozzo's Bloodline)]

- Able to create Magic Sword.
- Able to strengthen Magic Sword's ability.

<Long Sword>

- A large-sized sword with a broad blade.
- Welf's own created weapon. Has power exceeding the Upper Floors.
- Because it is the weapon he uses himself, he did not name it.

As long as it is not a weapon made for others, Welf will not name it.

**Short Story 1**
Quest x Quest

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The sky was clear.

The weather was so stable, that there was not even a cloud continuously for days in Orario.

As the gentle rays of sunlight shone down, citizens started to appear here and there on the main street, carrying their own things as they went their own way.

People carrying fruit baskets over their head, holding it up with their hands, people holding what appears to be clothes to wash under their armpit, people wearing nicely sewn clothes stylishly, obviously looking like merchants. Melted into the expanding tumult of people, carriages were running in the middle of the street.

In the scenery of this lively town, humans and demi-humans were mingled together, and, though it might be late to say this now, it was overflowing with an exotic mood.

“To-Today was a rough day too…”

While watching the scene of the town, I was heading to west on the main street, with uncertain steps.

This was the third day since I requested from Ais to teach me how to fight.

Training with her, in the darkness before the sun would even appear, beat my body up even before we proceeded towards our dungeon exploration. Rather than the fight with monsters we encounter in dungeon, the accumulated damage of the training might be more serious.

On the main street one could hear even laughing, as I alone, injured, poured my strength into my legs stepping on the stone paving.

This is also to become stronger.

To catch up to her, my master.

While I was telling that to myself, I was dragging forward my body full of pain, heading towards the meeting place, where Lili waits me for dungeon exploration.

“Bell…… Beeeell….”

An almost monotonous, slow voice.

As I realized someone is calling my name, I stop my leg, which started to take the next step. When I turned my head at that place, I found the source of the voice right away.

A member of the Miach Familia, the dog person, Naza.

She was standing still between some buildings connecting the main street to a back street and waving her hand at the height of her chest. She was wearing that same, strange jacket she always wears, with short sleeve on the left, and long sleeve on the right. On her right hand, she also wears a leather glove. She was wagging her tail coming out from her skirt sluggishly, as she came closer to me with her eyelids half closed, and calling for me.

Slightly gazing at her, and after looking left and right to check on the flow of people, I walked towards her to meet halfway.

“Umm, good morning. What are you doing at a place like this? Did something happen?”

“Yeah, just a bit……”

At this time of the day, and at this place, it is the first time I ever happened to meet her in these conditions.

When I leaned towards her, without changing that seemingly drowsy expression of her, Naza only moved her lips.

“I was waiting for you, Bell. I thought if I wait here, I can meet you……”

Every time I go from home to the dungeon in the middle of the city, I go through this western main street. It seems like, Naza partly predicted that I will go through here, and waited for me.

And when it comes to that important business with me….. She took out a rolled up parchment from her handbag, and held it out to me.

“Quest. Can I please ask for your help a bit…..?”

“Qu….est….?”

“Yeah. You will be properly rewarded, too….. I’d like you to take the things written in the note.”

When I was watching this parchment, which she called a note, and Naza’s face at the same time, she bowed her head lightly.

“Think about is like you help me and Miach-sama….. please.”

“O-okay……”

“There’s no deadline, but I think it would help more if you could do it soon……. Then, I’m counting on you.”

Naza waved me energetically for last, and went back to the back street behind her back. As I was watching her disappearing in the direction of Miacha Familia’s home, I was blinking repeatedly.

Umm, does that mean I got an errand……..?

I looked down on the parchment with monster names and other things on it, again. After I carefully looked at the written Koine (Orario’s common language), and the wavy line under it, while scratching my head, I decided I should meet up with Lili for now, and started to walk again.

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“Quest?”

Lili asked me puzzled, which to I answered yeah, and nodded.

A corner of the Central Park, near the Babel. In this park, which is often used as a meeting place, there are broadleaf trees and around them there are brickwork benches too.

While the dazzling sunlight filtering through the leaves showered my cheeks, I told about my exchange with Naza to Lili.

“That’s so unusual. Even if you are in the same faction, and in an intimate relationship with them, I haven’t heard about a lower grade adventurer getting a quest like that.”

“Is that works like that?”

“Yes. It depends on a lot of things, but quests related to Familias are normally things what higher grade adventurers can take.”

Lili, who has a long history of being a Supporter, is much more knowledgeable than someone like me when it comes to Dungeons. Also, because of that, she is an expert in information about adventurers. It seems like she can’t understand something about this, as she tilts her head asking “Can you show me that a bit?” and getting the parchment from me.

“Hmm, well, certainly, if it’s just something like this, it isn’t really that strange even if they ask someone who’s Lv.1, but……”

In the center of the quest, according to the parchment, is to collect the drop item, “Blue Butterfly Wings”.

Lili’s mouth turned down at the corners, as she looked up to me with her round eyes.

“Bell-sama. Could it be that you are being taken advantage of? The reward you would get isn’t confirmed either, right? It feels like for Lili that they pushed some troublesome things on to you…… also, they want to make it cheap.”

“Th…that must…….”

……not be it, is what I can’t say, probably.

If I think about the number of potions I have been made to buy by Naza, though it might be rude, but I am about to accept Lili's explanation as is.

To cover up that I started to sweat over it, I try to force a topic change.

"U…umm, you know. To begin with, what is a quest? I feel like I heard about it, but……"

The truth is, I feel like that Eina gave me a warning in the beginning, that "it's not good to fall for strange quests and accept them". It's just that, since I met Ais, I was working wholeheartedly to conquer Dungeons, and was too busy to care about anything else.

Hearing my words, Lili put her finger to her chin, and starts to ponder about something.

"It's true that it's not like it is a completely unrelated thing to Bell-sama from now on…. Let's see, just for today, let's spend our time on quests."

The second part of it, she said to me, and smiled pleasantly at me.

"Huh? But…."

"It's just the best chance to do that. It seems to me that Bell-sama is quite tired nowadays, anyway……"

Said Lili, like she could see through what I was thinking about in my heart, that I don't even have time to rest if I want to catch up to that admired person.

I easily falter to those eyes glancing at me from sideways. I implicitly felt like she is complaining about me not being frank about the early morning trainings with Ais.

"Sometimes taking a break is important as well, Bell-sama. On the occasion of taking a breather today, let's accept this quest."

"……I see, okay. Let's do that, then."

I said, with a bitter smile, thinking that Lili perfectly holds the reins over me.

But even then, she is thinking about me when she proposed this, so I decided to obediently go along with it.

I think it's true that what she is saying to me hits the point, anyway.

"Then, first, let's go to the Guild. I think it's better to learn about quests for future reference too."

Somehow laughing happily, Lili took my hand and started to pull me along.

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"A quest is, simply speaking, a general term of a request for an adventurer."

We are walking down the northwestern main street together.

On this main street, which is much wider than the other ones, we can see many adventurers, as it's implied by the fact they also call this street "Adventurer Street" too.

"We can interpret it as the people called clients asking adventurers to solve their various problems. The clients prepare a reward which is equal in value to the quest's contents, and the adventurers get that reward in exchange for completing the quest."

"Umm, is that the same as our connections with gods where we get 'blessings'....?"

"Yeah, if we borrow the words of gods, then it's a 'give and take'."

The 5 tatami wide paved part of the road was flooded with the sound of footsteps.

It's still early in the morning, before heading for discovering Dungeons, adventurers go to their Guild headquarters, or different item shops, each of them making their own preparations.

When I got distracted by an elf party in beautiful clothes and armor, Lili pinched me around my thigh. While I apologized continuously seeing her pouting face, I was properly listening to her continuing explanation.

“If I have to say an example to a typical quest in this Orario….. Instead of the powerless client, the adventurers go deep in the dungeon, and retrieve the resources or something like that.”

“Somehow, it’s really like a labyrinth city.

“Fufu, that’s right.”

Finally, as we moved ahead like we are sailing amongst the adventurers, a beautifully white, huge stone building appeared in front of us. A building which resembled the big shrine, our Guild headquarters.

When we entered the spacious lobby through the front garden, it was also crowded with adventurers going on their ways.

Lili shrewdly transformed into a cat girl, and while she sometimes twitchingly moved her cat ears, she stopped in front of the large bulletin board.

“Many quests are suggested through guilds. This is a summary of quests available right now.”

On the wide bulletin board there were countless parchments put up. There were official information about dungeons and adventurers too inside them, but most of them were quest requests as Lili said.

The contents of the quest, the reward, also as proof about the clients’ identity, handwritten signing or a familia’s emblem; these were on all of the parchments there.

“Umm….. ‘Collecting Hellhound’s Fang x10 Request’ …….. ‘24th floor; I want to trade it to treasure tree’s fruit and the rewards as written below’ ….. ‘High class only; Searching for extraordinary party. *note: joining condition: at least Lv.3′ …..”

As I was reading it out loud, I felt my cheek becoming stiff a little.

If there is a degree of difficulty, most of these were at a level that is not possibly achievable for me. The one which I could barely do is about this ‘Orc Skin x30 Gathering’ request.

Even then, it's not something that I would be able to do in a day and night..... It's quite difficult.

"As you can see, most Dungeon quests are targeted for 'middle floors' or lower ones."

'Middle floors'..... in short, starting from the 13th floor, the domain of Lv.2 or higher level adventurers.

Those adventurers, who ranked up, are generally summarized as 'Advanced level adventurers.'

"Why are there so few requests for upper floors?"

"It's because ordinary familias and adventurers can get there by themselves too. While it doesn't really suit adventurers, if they make a party, and carefully take their time, they can just walk through the upper floors until the 7th floor."

Ah, I see.

In Orario, about half of the adventurers are not ranked up, Lv.1 adventurers.

I can see why most familias can get to the upper floors, but can't extend their legs into the middle floors. Because there are less and less people who can get to the middle floors or lower floors, naturally there are more and more requests for lower floors.

That's why Lili said just before that there are many quests which contents are suited for advanced adventurers.

"However, the quests that are pinned up in the Guild are just the ones from familias and merchants, or as they say, the quests that are attractive for adventurers too."

"?"

"In short, which has a precise and definite reward..... so above all, is trusted."

When my expression showed that I can't quite catch up with the meaning, Lili started to move again.

We went away from the billboard, and we left behind the guild headquarter too.

“I meant that there are sha~dy quests too. Where the client’s name is hidden, or the contents of the quests seems rea~lly suspicious.”

“….Umm, so where they shirk payment, or something?”

“Ah, you are sharp, Bell-sama. Lili’s very happy that your judgment became better.”

Lili smiled at me, like a teacher who’s happy for their student’s growth.

By the way, Lili also did a trick like that, as she is telling me smiling brightly, my feigned laughing became stiff.

Just how much did she used to stray away from the path of adventurers, that Lili…….

“Anyway, if it’s a request with low level of credibility which are not approved by guilds, or quests from ordinary people are gathered together in bars like that. In more than one meaning, most of them are hard to deal with quests.”

Lili pointed at a bar from all the bars which are built next to the north-western main street.

As I understand, that one is a bar familia, and mediates not guild related – unofficial, if we say – quests. Certainly, as I stare hardly at it, I can see a signboard above the door which looks like a familia emblem.

By the way, it seems like these kinds of bar familias accumulate a lot of information from the guests who come in, and they have an informant side as well.

They manage the familia from the quest intermediation fee, and from selling information…. they can think well.

Really, there are a lot of kinds of familia all over in this world.

“In short: If you don’t want to get into trouble, I recommend you to avoid quests that are not mediated by guilds. ……Even if you get it directly from familia which you have good relations with.”

….. I understood what Lili was trying to say me.

Basically, this not trustable quest of Naza which I didn't get through the guild is too, a quest which I shouldn't accept in the first place, is what she's trying to teach me.

But, if it would be an unknown someone that's a different story, but with someone who I have met before, I feel like I shouldn't be that much alerted……

"That's why Bell-sama is called so naive. It's not something Lili should say, you can be taken advantage of easily, and get deceived."

…..It seems like what I was thinking was written on my face, and she declared this to me.

Since I'm a bit aware of the fact that this is true….. hmm, it's hard to retort.

"Well, as long as Lili lives, she will protect Bell-sama from any deception, so rest assured. Now then, about this is enough for the explanation about quests, so we should now get to the real issue at hand."

"Ah, yeah."

As we advanced slowly on the main street, I took out the parchment in question again.

I reread it again to confirm its contents, and I grasp the main points of the quest from Naza.

Hmm, even then, Blue Butterfly's Wings, huh….

"Blue Butterfly is, you know, that one, right? A so-called 'rare monster'….."

"Yeah. It appears at the upper floors, so it's not dangerous to Bell-sama now, but…… you might have to break a bone or two to find one." [16]
"As I thought…."

Naza said that there is no deadline, but…… it really is a bit troublesome, this quest which I accepted.

When I made a little bit troubled expression, to reduce my anxiety, Lili smiled sweetly at me.

“Don’t worry, Bell-sama. Lili has an idea. Let’s get a bit prepared, and then head towards the dungeon.”

…..Really, I rely a lot on Lili.

To this supporter who compensate for any incompetence of mine, I felt a bit apologetic, and more than that felt she was really reliable.

× × ×

‘Blue Butterfly.’

A butterfly monster that is said to appear on the 7th floor of the dungeon.

I heard that it has 4 transparent blue wings, and many adventurers stop in their fascination to watch it, as it is flying around, scattering its faintly sparkling scales.

The Blue Butterfly, which hides its non-monster like beauty, is, at the same time, well-known as a so called ‘rare monster’, because it is so extremely rare to encounter one.

On each floor, those monsters which are very few in numbers, and hardly ever show themselves, are called ‘rare monster’ by us, and the Blue Butterfly is one of them. Of course dropped items from hard to find rare monsters are also rare, and their value is high as well.

The Blue Butterfly is said to have a larger encounter chance than other rare monsters, but…… if you just try to look for it normally, it would take time to find one, for sure. The fact that I haven’t ever seen one yet is enough proof of that.

While thinking back about the picture book Eina made me read before about monsters, I thought that my first ever quest might not end in a day.

“…..we are quite deep in the inner part right now, right?”

“Yeah. We will soon get to the southern tip of the floor.”

Place: 7th floor. After we went to the item shop, and got in the dungeon, we made our way into this floor, where the Blue Butterfly appears.

Following Lili's directions, we did nothing but walk through the long and narrow, labyrinth-like road, spending almost an hour on just that. Going through the stairway that connects the floors, avoiding the regular route leading to it by far, we entered deeply to the 7th floor.

Though I have already been at this floor, I have never ever aimed at the deepest parts before. While the unknown route made me nervous, I took care of the monsters appearing, with my 'Hestia's Knife' and 'Baselard' quickly.

From the 'Killer Ant' I defeated, Lili picked up a 'Magic Stone' just as quickly.

"Lili, what's on the deep parts of this dungeon?"

"The dungeon's pantry."

Pantry? As I asked back, almost at the same time, the route's sight started to change.

The light green surface of the wall, the phosphorescent ceiling, the ground in front of our legs, it all made a rough appearance for the place. As we advanced, the systematic labyrinth form was disappearing, and was starting to make an illusion like we wandered into a cave.

While I was so surprised, I was repeatedly blinking, before I realized, the phosphorescence of the ceiling became weaker, and it lost its brightness too.

(The light is……)

Instead, from the inside of the turn of the cave-like route, a mysterious dim green light shined through.

When I stopped, and turned back to Lili without a word, she too, without saying anything, just nodded back to me. I held my breath and carefully advanced toward the middle of the cave.

My pulsation became a bit faster, and its sound made my lung vibrate.

Since I became accustomed to entering dungeons, I haven't been feeling this sensation, preceding entering an unexplored region. An untrodden territory – the presentiment of the 'unknown' have filled my new and fickle adventurer chest too with much nervousness and quiet excitement.

Listening to our echoing footsteps, we slowly stick our faces out from the turn of the route and advanced towards our final destination, where the source of the green light waited us.

"…."

At the moment, when I stepped into there, I left behind somewhere my words I wanted to say.

It was a wide, wide space.

A cave so spacious, I haven't ever seen even at deeper floors.

The first thing grabbing my attention was green quartz standing right in front of us.

The huge crystal pillar reached the ceiling of the dim and enormous cave, and was integrated in the wall behind it. At places the crooked surface projected by the crystallization reminded me of a bark of a tree, and the pillar really could be called a quartz tree.

The green, dim light shining through was coming from the quartz tree.

(The monsters….)

A transparent liquid was soaking through the quartz tree, and the dripping liquid made a large spring at the root.

And, as if pursuing the liquid, the Killer Ants and Purple Moths were clinging to the tree, and Needle Rabbits were putting their tongue into the spring, wetting their tongues with it.

"Are you surprised?"

“Lili…..”

“This is the pantry……. For the dungeon monsters, it’s a blessed place for recreation.”

I was still dumbfounded as Lili asked me that, and then gave me an explanation.

Monsters born in the dungeon too, of course, become hungry as time goes on. It seems like, while some of them are preying on adventurers, and some of them are eating each other, for most of them, the dungeon is a womb, granting them that liquid, which they absorb to satiate their hunger.

This wide space is a source of nutrients for monsters.

Truly, the pantry of the dungeon.

“….Could it be, that Blue Butterflies can be found here?”

“Yeah. In my opinion, instead of looking around for them randomly, hiding here, waiting for them, we have more chance to come across one.”

I agreed.

Except the beginning floors of 1st floor and 2nd floor, there seems to be two or three pantries on each floor. If we stick to one of those places, then, even without wandering around the floor, which is really wide in itself, Blue Butterflies will become hungry and come here, where we might be able to seize them down.

Ambushing, and capturing the prey, could we say it is the so called ‘hunting’?

“Now then, Bell-sama, don’t just stand there in fascination; let’s hide ourselves. If the monsters find us, that would also be terrible.”

“Ah…. ri-right.”

Lili pushed my back forcefully as I was standing there in front of the entrance of the passage.

Other than the route we entered through to this huge cave, there are more than ten passages connecting it to the dungeon, and there are monsters showing up from them even now. If we would be found, and made to fight with all of the monsters here….. it wouldn't be an appealing scene.

We made our way to the corner of the cave quickly.

"Now then, excuse me."

Lili put down her backpack, and quickly took out a large cloth from it. It was colored in dim green, which means it was a tint that can merge in the dim green color of the 7th floors wall.

Lili unfolded that cloth, which looked as a huge mantle, in a flash, and put it on the both of us from our heads.

"So you bought it for this……"

"Yeah. There aren't any monsters on the 7th floor with a sharp nose, so as long as we stay quiet, we can hide ourselves with this."

Lili said to prepare ourselves, and purchased this item, before coming to the dungeon. I was thinking about what on earth we will use this for, but….. so it's for this.

The monsters were engrossed in their meal, without showing any sign of noticing us in our camouflage which absorbed us into the wall and the scenery.

"H-hey, Lili? Aren't you clinging too much on me?"

"Not at all. We also need to hide my backpack too, so there is no free room under the cloth. That's right, we have to move even closer to each other…"

Lili came even nearer with her tiny body, which unintentionally made me a little excited.

Pushing her body against mine, leaning on me, Lili clung tightly on the right side of my body. I felt the softness of her body through her clothes, which made me blush.

What she is saying is right, but….. is it just in my head, or does she seem to be enjoying this?

As I made some movement, flustered, she repeatedly made a low voice, fluttering about.

“…B-By the way, there are trap items that lure monsters, right? If they have their own food, wouldn’t that make the monsters not fall for them….?”

To hide my embarrassment over getting glued to each other, I brought up that topic.

Lili was in such a good mood, that it seemed she could start purring like a cat any moment, and she immediately answered my question.

“Bell-sama, if you eat the same thing again and again, won’t you get tired of it?”

“Ah…..”

“Fufu, that’s how it is. Monsters are gourmets too.”

Since I learnt something new again, I thought this is the chance to ask Lili about something I find strange.

When I asked her why there aren’t any other adventurers at this perfect place for hunting, Lili says that’s because the pantry is just so deep inside the floor. There are more than one pantries on each level, but they are all in the deepest parts of their floor, and in the worst case scenario, it can take more time than descending two floors. If you would take hours to get here, and hunt like this, – if you have the ability to walk around this pantry successfully – then it is more effective, and makes more money if you go to the next floor, attacking monsters for higher quality Magic Stones.

More than anything, if you make a mistake here, you might be crushed by the huge amount of monsters coming from inside the dungeon.

For the above reasons, it is really rare that adventurers choose the pantry as battlefield.

(…And maybe they also think that they don’t want to rampage through this beautiful scenery, I wonder.)

Hidden by the cloth, looking at the scenery, that’s what I feel.

A warm green light, shining in a huge cave.

The sparkles of the crystals emitted from the tree were really beautiful, and transparent. The spring stretching out around the tree lights up quietly the water's surface as if reflecting the moon's light.

By the side of the spring there are white flowers with blue stem, and the Needle Rabbits sometimes push through them and swiftly show their faces. Above them are the Purple Moths clinging on the quartz, resting their wings, while dyed green by the light. A group of Killer Ants make a splashing sound, while advancing silently to the spring through the tree.

The whole scenery in this green light seemed gentle.

The monsters that should be ferocious and ugly, now, for some reason, looked beautiful.

Even though I know more than enough that they are the enemy of humanity, monsters.

Even though I know that if I encounter them, they are dangerous beings, attacking without reason.

I just want to leave this scenery as is.

As I looked through that magical space, I had this little bit histrionic thought.

"……! Bell-sama."

"!"

Stiffening her shoulders for a moment, Lili shook my arms.

Regaining my awareness, I suddenly moved my body up and down, and followed Lili's line of sight which looked in front of us, as if it wants to eat into something. And then I immediately opened both of my eyes wide.

Elegantly flapping its wings, a blue creature.

Several of the quest's goal, Blue Butterflies in a group, swimming through the air, appeared at this pantry.

"It was worth all that walking into this pantry, huh."

"Y-Yeah."

While we both enlivened ourselves a bit, we began to prepare so we can move at any time.

Those butterflies were so beautiful that can rival the beauty of the scenery in this cave. Compared to the Purple Moth, their body is much more delicate, and their 4 wings are really lively. The blue trail they leave behind themselves in the air are, indeed something, that makes the people breath out with admiration.

While the Blue Butterfly doesn't have too much fighting power, the blue scales falling out of them has an effect that heals the injuries of other monsters.

I'm sure the reason Naza wants dropped items from Blue butterflies is that it would be useful to develop a potion.

"We can't go on a rampage here. Wait for them to leave the pantry, and follow them."

"Yeah, got it."

Switching over to concentrating on the quest, me and Lili quietly waited for a little more.

× × ×
The fresh air gently stroked our faces.

The moment we left Babel, while closing one eye because of the wind gliding on my skin, I smiled at Lili next to me.

"I'm glad it went good."

"Yes, we collected the drop item luckily. Moreover this many of them."

Lili also smiled back at me happily. After that, we pursued the pack of Blue Butterfly, and managed to defeat them all, and returned to the surface.

As Lili said, the Blue Butterfly we defeated all dropped the items we needed, and of course we had a pleasant feeling about the fact how much we shortened our time and effort.

Five wings in total…… With this, the quest giver, Naza, will be satisfied for sure.

“Even if we would just bring these five wings to the guild, I’m sure they would pay a solid 9000 Varisu. The fact that the wing isn’t damaged is big too. No, depending on the negotiations, it might go even higher than that. …hmm~mm, it’s a bit of a waste~.”

It seems Lili’s heart is filled with the happiness over the rare monster’s drop item, she said this with a seemingly excited tone. As she looked like she was in high spirit, I made a wry smile, and we headed to the western main street from the central park.

(I guess it was good for a change of pace…….)

Seeing that beautiful scenery, I feel like my heart felt at ease.

It was a good rest, even if not planned. While feeling a pleasant tiredness filling my whole body, I shaped up a refreshed pace of walking.

“Excuse me, good day-.”

“…..Bell?”

Going through a back street, I enter the Miach Familia’s home.

Naza, who was behind the counter have looked at me after I entered the door, and opened up those half-closed eyes of her a bit.

“Could it be, that you have already completed the quest for us….?”

“Yes. I completed it just now.”

I held the package, which was the size of a shield, under my arm, and I opened it to show its contents.

Seeing the shiny ‘Blue Butterfly’s Wing’, Naza looked unusually confused. And then, she instantly loosened her expression happily.

Her dog tail pointing to the floor, was swaying an unusually lot.

“Thank you, Bell…… You go! I really see you in a different light now.”

“W-well…..”

“I always believed you are someone able……”

Being complimented by the smiling Naza, I put my hand to my head, and blushed a little.

Naza lightly patted on my unintentionally blushing head.

“Sorry to disturb you, while you are busy, but wouldn’t you already exchange the goods with the reward?”

Joined in to the conversation Lili like that, who didn’t say anything until that point.

Naza stopped her movement, and moved her gaze down to Lili, who showed a sweet smile on her whole face, without any maliciousness.

Naza, who met Lili for the first time there, probably took it as Lili is in my party, and said “….That’s right.” nodding obediently, and went back behind the counter.

“Bell-sama, don’t be so flirty, please.”

“I-It’s not like I’m flirty…”

“Listen, please remember this: until you steadily get your reward, the quest continues.”

“……huh?”

I unintentionally murmured a little because of the somehow aphorismatic words, but Lili just kept smiling sweetly at Naza.

While I was taken in by puzzlement, Naza came back holding a wooden case immediately.

“This is the reward…. Two dozen of potion.”

“T-Two dozen!?”

The potions I buy from the Miach Familia, even the one with the lowest price is at least 500 varisu, so with 24 of them…. 12,000 varisu!

It includes a bit of bonus for the labor, adds Naza, to which I was about to start thanking her deeply.

However, as I was happy about my first quest reward, and tried to hand the package with the Blue Butterfly Wings over – **smack.**
A little hand reaching from my side grabbed my wrist.

“Li-Lili…..?”

“Can you please wait a bit, Bell-sama?”

Without averting her gaze from Naza, with natural, swift movements, she reached out her hands to the wooden case she held.

What she took out was a single test tube with blue tincture in it.

“Excuse me, for a bit. I will pay the price later.”

“Huh, wai…”

Without waiting for approval, Lili pulled out the cork, and put her small nose close to the test tube.

Checking the fragrance, examining the color. Next to the somehow panicky Naza, Lili quickly poured a drop of potion on her own hand, and licked it – in the next moment:

“fufu, this potion is 500 varisu? It must be a profitable business, I’m almost envious.”

While still wearing a smile like a pure child, she said this imbued with anger.

“….”

“This is the watered down version of the original tincture, right? With this, its effect is less than half compared to the original. The unique sweetness of the potion is falsified with flavoring, too, so yeah, it’s a common trick.”

The shocking truth being revealed.

Me and Naza lost our words, and being rooted to where we were by the still sweetly smiling Lili.

“At best, it is about 200 varisu. You have been ripped off by a lot until now, huh, Bell-sama. — Of course, it isn’t enough at aaaaaaall for this times reward either.”

Naza was already pale.

Her eyes still in that half-closed position, she was dripping in sweat. Her tail was bending back and forth in unbelievable directions.

I still couldn’t come out of my shock.

“Now, how will you pay your debt?”

With eyes opened thinly, smiling like a little demon, Lili asked.

× × ×
“I’m sorry!!”

Miach-sama bowed his head deeply.

His voice resounded in the room invaded by the madder red light of the setting sun.

Right next to him is Naza, grabbing her head and bending her back forcibly.

“It’s because of my negligence of supervision, I’m really sorry, Bell! You will get back all the money you got ripped off until now!”

“Ah, no, Miach-sama, its okay, so please, lift your…”

When I nervously suggested, lifted his dejected face up and “I’m sorry” apologized once more.

A tall and flexible figure. His ultramarine color hair is long for a man, and gave the impression of a young noble. The worn out grey robe he wore, made that beautiful figure stand out even more.

Naza’s chief god, Miach-sama’s face, which was suitable as a transcendental existence was frowning with deep pain right now.

“We caused trouble to you too, Hestia. Doing something like this, exploiting money from your purse…”

“Well, what is done, cannot be undone. Be careful to not let this happen from now on, and take responsibility for everything. Miach helps us always, so with that, let’s say we are even.”

“Alright, I promise….”

After Lili blamed Naza without any restraint, in the Miach Familia’s home, together with Goddess and Miach-sama, we held an apology meeting.

It seems like Miach-sama didn’t know about Naza’s shady conducts until now, and kept apologizing there.

Naza, whose head was held down, was still not allowed to lift her face up.

“At any rate, supporter, good job at noticing this. You are doing a great job as the helper of Bell, so I’m at ease. Thank you.”

“No, I’m just happy if I can be of use to Bell-sama and Hestia-sama.”

H-Helper…?

Hearing the generously nodding Goddess’s, and respectfully bowing Lili’s exchange, I sweat a little. It seems like, without me knowing, some kind of agreement has been made between them concerning me….

“…..Naza, why did you do something like this!? Answer!”

Roared Miach-sama.

Being able to move again, Naza laid her body, and suddenly turned sideways.

Her half-upped hair gently got filled up with air.

“The familia’s account book is in a desperate situation since forever… The unknowing rabbit was an easy target.”

Miach-sama’s and my face became stiff at the same time. To be called a rabbit, and an easy target…..

Those half-closed eyes and that intonation less tone of her voice was as always, but… her tail coming out from back was shaking with fear.

“Humph, you moron! What good comes from a coin you earned by cheating!? Naza, my child, this nether world is moving by faith and trust, business is one of the prime proofs of that. You, for just a little money, almost lost the trust of these people, you know!?”

It’s an extremely foolish thing to do, is what Miach-sama said with a powerful tone and gaze.

Naza, who lightly turned downward, set her teeth, then with a sharp gaze glared at Miach-sama.

For the first time I see, Naza showing an expression.

“You say that, but Miach-sama, without caring about who it is, you make a nice face, and give out potions for free. That’s why we can’t even get back our expenses. In addition, you are seducing a lot of girls, without even being aware of yourself, make them misunderstand… Just how much I was bearing the consequences for that….!”

“Wha-What are you talking about!? Seducing them, or something like that; don’t say things that are easy to misunderstand!”

Because of this unexpected counterattack from Naza, Miach-sama was very surprised. Goddess’s and Lili’s gaze became somewhat colder.

It’s true that Miach-sama has that genetic smile which makes women red in the face…… It seems like he himself doesn’t realize it at all, as he had a perplexed expression on his face.

“I did something bad to Bell, but….. even then, with things going on as it is, we can’t pay back our loan, and it will expand to the ten thousands of scale…..!”

‘Huh?’ I opened up my eyes widely.

As I looked to Hestia-sama unintentionally, she was also crooking her eyebrow, and was puzzled.

Loan…..?

Looking at Miach-sama’s uncomfortable expression, and Naza’s frustrated expression, they were acting suspiciously. Does Miach-sama have something he is hesitating to say?

And as I was thinking about that…

“Fuhahahahahahahaha, Excuse my intrusioooooooooon!!”

With a roaring laughter ringing in our eardrums, the store’s door had been smashed through.

“!?”

“I’m here to take this month’s share of the loan, Mi~a~ch.”

The one who appeared was an elderly, male god, with grayish hair and beard.

Even though his appearance showed his age, he still looked organized….. however, I feel like the atmosphere lingering around him messes up some of that.

Unpleasant grinning, and haughty expression. He was wearing an extravagant robe with gold and silver embroidery, and somehow it felt like he is conscious about Miach-sama’s look, and tried to look elegant…

“Dian…….!”

“No matter how much I waited, you didn’t come, so I went out of my way, and came here. Be grateful, poor people, fuhahahahahahahahaha!?”

…..Somehow I figured out the personality of this god.

“It’s a dusty shop as always! If I stay here for long, my body would be harmed, so let’s get down to business already! There are also unusually many poor people here, too!”

Naza had an intense expression, almost like she was looking at an old enemy, and Miach-sama also made a sour face, as if he just consumed a bitter bug. Because of the leaping flames of sarcasm, even Hestia-sama was in a shock, saying “what!?”

“Dian Cecht-sama, am I right?”

“Lili…….”

“He’s popular even amongst adventurers, he is leading the familia of healing and medicine. From the viewpoint of Miach-sama’s familia, which sells potions…. they are competitors, I guess.”

Hearing this information whispered to my ear, I nodded. Miach-sama’s and Naza’s open hostility too, and Dian Cecht-sama’s provocative way of speaking too must be because of the deep pretext existing between them.

“So, did you prepare the payment for this month, Miach~?”

“That’s….!”

“Fufun, it’s not, is it? It’s not, right? guhahahahahahahaha! You eternal non-payers!”

*creak*, Miach-sama, and Naza were gritting their teeth together with all their might. “I’m a benevolent man, so I let it go for time after time, but your unprincipled behavior hurts my eyes pretty much. If you don’t pay the share for this month until tomorrow, I will drive you bastards out, and sell this shabby home! Prepare yourselves, got it!?”

Spitting saliva all around, Dian Cecht-sama heartily laughed.

“Fuhahahahahahaha!! We are going home, Airmid!” /* Miach is a god of healing from Irish mythology, and he is the son of Dian Cecht, who is also a god of healing, while he has another child, Miach’s sister, who is called Airmid*/

“Yes.”

Standing all this time in front of the door, a female group member waiting behind Dian Cecht-sama started to move.

She was short, looking like as if she was a delicate doll, and after bowing her head a little to us, she followed her chief god, who was striding away laughing.

A silence after the storm was all he left behind between us.

× × ×
“That Dian Cecht was hard to compromise with ever since we were in heaven…..”

Bit by bit, Miach-sama tells us his story.

Things coming to this, going home and not listening to his story is not an option. We were lending our ears to hear about the circumstances of the Miach familia.

“After coming to this nether world, and creating a familia too, he caused conflict at every opportunity. Including the faction activity itself, and we were competing countless times, but….”

“Because of me, that was crushed.”

From next to Miach-sama, whose voice became weaker, Naza interrupted.

“I used to be an adventurer too.”

“Huh….?”

“I used to dive into dungeons and earned money, like you now, Bell, but…. one day, I messed it up. I have been beaten up by monsters real hard, and my right arm got eaten.”

Before I could ask, she explained.

Naza tucked up the right sleeve of that asymmetric shirt she was wearing, which was long sleeve just on her right arm.

In the next moment, I became speechless, and breathless.

“A silver artificial arm……!?”

“In place of my lost hand, Miach-sama prepared this….. bowing his head countless times to that Dian Cecht Familia.”

Lili’s surprised voice resounds.

As she said, Naza’s right arm was made by a mass of silver.

A metal polished so smoothly, it can be mistaken for a sharpened blade. While it looked just as if it was a human arm, it can be clearly seen that the joints are embedded with jewels.

When she took the glove off too from her right hand, it could be seen that even to the tip of finger it was made by silver.

“The Diancecht Familia is a familia of healing and medicine. Other than selling potions, answering the demands of adventurers, they use more professional items and healing techniques. This Airgetlám is the result of that.

With her stretched left hand, she strongly gripped her silver right arm, making it creak.

“Miach-sama bought this artificial hand just for my sake, and took a loan. The other group members, who were with us until that were groaning about that unthinkably huge debt, abandoned Miach-sama….. and all of them left.”

….The Miach Familia used to be a familia with scale and power in the center field, as they said. Also, as a medication familia, they weren’t inferior to the Dian Cecht Familia.

It seems that because of Naza’s accident, they broke down, and they fell low.

What remained to Miach-sama, was an ex-adventurer, who became useless, and a ridiculously big debt, said Naza plainly.

“I became unable to fight with monsters. My seniors taught me the knowledge and the technique of making potions, so I was able to change into a potion maker, but…… I can’t earn enough money at all to pay back our debt. I’m useless.”

“Naza…”

“The reason we have a debt with them is because of that. It’s all my fault.”

“Naza, it’s okay already. Cut it.”

Hearing Miach-sama’s quiet voice, Naza, who looked like she was still about to say something, kept silent.

What came instead was a heavy silence.

The fact that Naza is an ex-adventurer, or that her right arm is an artificial one, the things I didn’t know were too shocking, and I couldn’t even find the words to say. Hestia-sama too, seemed like she didn’t hear about Miach-sama’s downfall, folded

her arms, kept silent, and closed her eyes. Lili was looking at Naza and Miach-sama with a calm expression.

Naza may have been scamming money from us, but……. If I would have been in her place, after all, just like her, I might have got involved in something like this too.

Paying back the good, what I received by goddess, who never left me behind, with doing something wrong.

Just with that, this is all just heart-breaking.

I would rather just scream in pain.

"….And, what will you do? I understood the circumstances of Miach-sama, but now, we have to deal with the things in front of us. Dian said something like selling out this house."

Goddess broke the silence, asking if they have any outlook for paying back the amount of money by tomorrow.

Hearing that question, Miach-sama made a serious face, and with just his eye, he looked at Naza.

Naza, after looking around, casts her eyes down.

"There is a method, but…"

And with weakening voice, she muttered.

"Just me alone…. With just Miach-sama and me, we can't do it……"

The light of sunset reflected from the window's glass, blurringly sparkled.

The noise of the main street, which should be far away, reached this place, like a whispering voice.

As if she couldn't look us into the eyes, Naza hanged her head. The word 'help me' is farther away for her than anything else, as she was hiding things from us.

As the silence came back again, without being able to calm down, I looked at the faces of the others over and over again and at last, I looked at Goddess asking for help.

Hestia-sama looked back at me for a while with her mysterious, bluish eyes, asking me gently without words: what do you want to do?

Which meant that I can decide, she gave me the permission to do that.

I nodded back in my mind to Goddess, whose gentle gaze was as if a mother looking at her child, with a lump in my throat.

I desperately chose my words, and to cast away this dark atmosphere, I began to talk loudly.

“Ah, yeah… Li-Lili. We talked about this already, but, wouldn’t you like to accept more quests? Just that one was not enough….. A-Also, it would make a great lesson.”

With terrible acting, I forced that topic.

Lili opened up her eyes widely, and realizing my true intention, after showing a wry smile as if saying “good grief”, she decided to play along with my poor acting.

“That’s right, I wonder if there would be anyone who would be able to give us, with our unmanageable vitality, a quest.”

While closing her eyes, smiling, Lili gave her approval, to which both Miach-sama and Naza showed a surprised expression.

Hestia-sama smiled a little too, and turned to Miach-sama.

“So with that, Miach, do you have any job? Think about it like helping out these kids, with their youthful vigor. Oh, it can be from any little trouble, to helping with paying back your loan, you know?”

“Hestia, such things… no, excuse me. I’ll be in your debt.”

While Miach was saying his thanks, next to him, Naza looked like somehow she is unable to stay put, and looked at me.

“Bell, is it okay….? I….”

“…Me and Lili, we were both saved by you, Naza.”

That day, when we were cornered by a large group of Killer Ants.

No matter what the potion was made of, that one magic potion she made and sold us, saved us from that dilemma.

Even if we don’t take that into account, I can’t abandon these people who with we always supported each other.

When I lowered my eyebrows and laughed, Naza opened her eyes wide, and covered her face.

“I’m sorry…. Thank you.”

Whispering the last word quietly, she bowed her head to us.

Quest Accepted.

Client: Miach Familia

Reward: Finished product of new potion.

Details: Gathering monster eggs.

Notes: “Let’s give it our all together. Thanks.”

The next day, early in the morning, we leave the city.

I did as I was asked to yesterday, and I had my morning training with Ais finish earlier, and obeying Miach-sama's orders, I helped with various preparations. After borrowing a carriage from a tradesman, and finishing the packing, Lili and Goddess joined us, although being a bit late.

Two gods, and three dependents. One probably couldn't see another carriage with a unique party like this, as we departed from the city with the sunrise.

"Bell, good job since so early morning. You have woke up quite early to help Miach-sama, right?"

"Ha-hahaha…."

Just as with Lili, I didn't talk about my training with Ais to Goddess. How should I say, if she finds out, it would become something big.

Apologizing repeatedly in my mind, I tried to change the topic before being suspicious, and talked to Naza.

"Umm, Naza. Then, as we talked about it yesterday, today we……"

"Yeah. We have to prepare the money today, so we don't have time. That's why we'll turn the tables by developing a new potion and sell it directly to the Dian Cecht Familia…"

Naza, who was wearing traveling clothes, which are easy to move around in, answered to me without intonation.

After getting over with the little troublesome formalities, the carriage left Orario from the eastern gate, and advanced through the grasslands overgrown with flowers and plants.

"I think I asked it yesterday too, but will it go okay? Making a new potion, you say that so easily, but….."

"It's okay, I have my expectations about that, so….."

Naza showed unusual confidence to Lili's question. While still looking with those half-closed eyes, and that sleepy expression, on the other hand, her tail was wavering sluggishly.

"I still haven't asked about the destination, so where is this carriage heading?"

"The jungle of Theoro. It isn't a long distance, but it will still take some time. It's a rare opportunity, so until we arrive, we shall deepen our bonds."

This time Miach-sama answered Hestia-sama's question, and his last words were pointed towards Lili.

The wooden carriage was narrower than I thought. As the wheels are receiving some impact, that shakes my whole body, my shoulder touched the shoulders of those who are next to me. By the way, our positions are as follows: Close to the driver's seat, Miach-sama. Next to him is me, then Hestia-sama, Lili and Naza, making it a circle.

The carriage didn't have canopy or anything on top, and as the rays of the morning sun shined inside, we did as Miach-sama said and had a lively discussion.

"Naza-sama, as I heard you changed from being an adventurer to a potion creator; can I assume, you have the 'Mixing' ability?"

"Yeah, that's right……. By helping making potions, the excelia (exp) for it appeared inside me, and luckily I could manifest it……"

"Umm, 'Mixing' is…..?'

"When one makes medicines for potions and other things, it's the development ability to make higher quality potions with, Bell-sama."

When one ranks up, depending on their excelia tendency, a development ability can manifest itself, and it seems one of them is 'Mixing'. It's an ability that is completely related to making potions, and it seems like the magical ability of healing wounds, so quick that it seems like the wound instantly closes, can be acquired through this ability.

It seems like it's the same with the "Smithing" ability too, but "Mixing" and other profession-related development abilities are connected to strengthening armor and potions just by owning them.

Even if you make it with the same method, from the same materials, with the same tools, depending on having the ability or not having it, its performance changes a lot.

"But, if you have a development ability, that means…"

"Hmm, yeah, I'm Lv.2….."

I opened up my eyes as widely as possible.

S-So that means Naza is someone with ability as strong as advanced adventurers…..

"I could get to the middles floors, but the monsters there made a whole roast of me……. Both of my hands and both of my legs were devoured by them."

"Huh-"

"My left arm and my legs were somehow able to become normal again, but my right hand, which was eaten without leaving even the bones, couldn't recover……. From that point, probably, I couldn't fight with monsters anymore. No matter what kind of monsters my enemy are, even just facing them….. I can't stop shaking."

As she told me that gruesome story, it sent chills down my spine.

The stench of burnt meat floating from her body.

While collapsed, face up, the sense of swarming monsters tearing up her legs and arms.

The vivid memory of the fear from burning up torments her even now, and grown into a fatal trauma when it comes to monsters, said Naza.

"…..I'm sorry, I didn't want to scare you."

"Ah, n-no….."

“Anyway, while you are exploring dungeons, you should be careful….. It took me 6 years to rank up, but…… it doesn’t matter how strong you become, when you lose it, it happens in a moment…”

While gulping, I etched this lesson of Naza deeply in my mind.

“At any rate, that artificial hand is really well made. There isn’t any hindrance when you are moving it, is there?”

“Yeah, I can move it freely……”

“It cost an outrageous amount of money, but we got the best from Dian. It’s frustrating to admit it, but his familia’s power can be trusted.”

Goddess then changed the subject indirectly, changing the atmosphere which became a bit heavy by then. While I can’t say that this carriage was comfortable to travel, with all the shaking, but as we went on, our conversation became more and more casual.

East from Orario, the plains continued, and everywhere we looked we could only see the grasslands. Unique in the whole world, Orario, which is the city with the highest demon stone products export, inevitably has prosperous trade with various areas, and the roads leading to the city were well maintained everywhere. The road, which our carriage went on too, was paved with white stones, and there was no level difference at all.

“Miach-sama just won’t realize my feelings at all…. Though it’s good that he doesn’t realize the passionate gazes of other girls either…… He’s so thickheaded, sometimes I even doubt he’s really a god….”

“Ah… I get that, I get that. Our Bell is also so slow that, I always want to cry.”

“Fufu, Hestia-sama, in your case, you are so admired and put in a distance, that in the first place, you might not even be recognized as a member of the opposite sex. It’s better not to turn your back to reality, you know? ….Though Lili is also a bit treated as a little sister.”

“…..”

By the time we realized, the women assembled together in their group, while the men had a somehow ashamed group. Because of the whispering talk, which we couldn't even hear, me and Miach-sama looked at each other, and tried to look small.

At last, after leaving many other carriages which headed to Orario on this wide road, through this grassland…

About when the sun made its way up to the sky, we arrived to our destination.

"So th-this is…."

"Wow~ It's not called a jungle for nothing."

To this scenery we laid upon our eyes for the first time, me and Goddess got overwhelmed.

'The jungle of Theoro"

If you go straight to the east from Orario, and go to the base of the Alb Mountains, there you find this enormous jungle.

The trees that made the jungle were generally enormously huge, and their trunks were also wide. The prosperity of wildflowers and mosses, and other plants were also remarkable, so much that it made me think about the word: 'the kingdom of green'.

We got off the carriage, and quickly began our preparations, each of us carrying out own luggage.

We told the hired driver to wait at a place farther away from the woods, we stepped in the jungle.

"We are going to gather monster eggs, right?"

"Right; different from a drop item, a monster's egg is……."

Our motive to come here in this jungle of Theoro was, it seems, eggs of a certain monster. It seems like Naza wants to use those eggs as ingredient for a new potion she makes.

The monsters emerged to the surface in ancient times, and they all took their own reproductive behavior, continued to breed, and even in our era, their descendants inhabit this world. If we think about it like that, then it's not strange at all, that they lay eggs, but…… now that we became accustomed to it that monsters are born from the dungeon, through our dungeon explorations, it brings along a sense of discomfort to us.

While still paying attention to any sign of monsters, I tilted my head to the side many times.

"…..Bell, stop there."

As we were advancing deep into the jungle in a formation, me leading the way, Naza stopped me.

She squinted and looked ahead, where there was an open, and wide hollow.

She immediately began to throw orders around. First, she said to Hestia-sama and Miach-sama to stay at this place, and left their defense to Lili.

Then she waved at me to follow her.

"Bell, here."

While crouching closer to the hollow, Naza gave me the equipment she carried.

A quite old-fashioned huge sword, and a backpack with something inside it.

"Wh-what do we use this for?"

"If you don't have a weapon at least like this against them, I think it would be hard… Please carry that backpack."

Because of these disturbing words, I started to sweat, when Naza stopped at the shadows of a certain tree.

There was just a little bit of distance left until the hollow. Naza sniffed the air frequently, and lifted up her dog ears on her head.

I felt the tension going up, which made me more and more nervous – then suddenly without any prelude, Naza made her move.

She reached out to my back, and she opened up the tightly closed opening of the backpack.

“Uhh….!?”

At once enshrouding me was a strong, and stimulating stench to my nose.

While I was groaning reflexively to the strangely familiar smell, Naza suddenly put her hands up.

“Then, give it your all, Bell. Sorry.”

Huh? – I didn’t even have time to say that, before Naza disappeared from that place.

She left me there, slipping through between the trees, without a noise, with a speed as fast as expected of someone who is Lv.2.

As I looked at her way, surprised and absentmindedly…….. Suddenly *blub*.
“….huh?”

Dropping on my head, a sopping mucus.

Feeling the gross, transparent fluid on my skin, I slowly turned back, and looked up.

“uuuuu…..”

Which I looked eye to eye with was a dinosaur, dropping huge balls of spit on me.

My face went ghastly pale with a grand force, as I realized what the stench is coming from in the backpack.

A trap item to lure that hungry monster there.

“GROOOOWL!!”

“HUUUUUH!?”

Its growling and my screaming overlapped.

I turned my back to its huge jaw closing in on me, and started to run away with all my might.

“Is-Isn’t it a huge monsteeeeeeeeeer!?”

“Hey, B-Bell!?”

“B… ‘Bradsaurus’…..!?”

After Hestia’s scream, Lili said surprised.

A scarlet monster, 5 meters tall.

While growling so loud it almost broke eardrums, it was chasing after the bait which was crying and screaming.

“W-Wait a moment, that monster is, from the 30th floor, the evil….!?

“It’s okay. Monsters on the surface are way weaker than monsters in the dungeon.”

Opposite to the agitated Lili, Naza, who came back, said calmly.

“Let’s go to the hollow now. Until the monster is chasing after Bell, it’s our chance.”

Together with Hestia, and the others, Naza headed toward the hollow.

When they arrived to the place without trees, some tens of eggs were laying in a bundle there, which made it clear, that it is indeed the nest of the monsters.

“Wouldn’t there have been a better method……?”

“There isn’t. If we would have fought with all of the Bradsaurus here, we couldn’t have protected Miach-sama and Hestia-sama.”

“I’m sorry, Bell……..”

“Hey, shit, everyone, if you have time to move your mouth, then move your arms instead! Bell will get eaten!”

While speaking, Hestia-sama was gathering the eggs hurryingly.

Every one of them packed as many eggs in their backpacks as they could.

“Naza-sama, what you said earlier is the truth?”

“It is the truth. The monsters on the surface, which reproduced here since ancient times don’t have most of their magic stone in their chests.”

While working, Naza answered Lili’s question.

The monsters that left the dungeon obeyed their instinct, and to keep up their race, they left descendants behind.

Their forming into a colony was, at the same time, the decline in their powers as individual beings. The monsters which had their own power as individual creatures find a way to reproduction by scraping off from their core, their magic stone, and share it with their descendants.

After many many years, the magic stone inside the monsters became reduced in scale, and its strength became considerably weaker than of the original monsters coming up to the surface.

”A Bradsaurus from the surface is about a bit stronger than an Orc from the dungeon……”

While saying that, Naza looked at the direction of where Bell was.

The three Bradsaurus was immersed in the hunt. There were more of them now. Thanks to that, Bell’s screaming went through the roof too.

Naza stood up, and took out her weapons she carried on her back.

A longbow that was just as if it was made for her stature. She took out an arrow with her silver artificial hand coming out of her shoulder, and nocked it with her left arm.

From a distance this big, her hands won't shake from her trauma. Naza, while the sunlight filtering through the trees lit her unsymmetrical clothes on top of her traveling clothes, watching her target with both of her eyes, she shot an arrow quickly.

At the moment her hand let go, the arrow flied with an amazing speed, and pierced through the Bradsaurus in the eye.

"————!?"

A huge roar can be heard.

The monster lost its balance, staggered, and collapsed together with another Bradsaurus that was running next to it.

An earth tremor shook the jungle as Bell opened up his eyes widely, turning back, and drew his sword with a huge force. While the Bradsaurus that was left was getting closer and closer to him, he attacked as well, believing in Naza's protection.

" —I'm so happy about things like that."

"AAAAAAAAARGH!!"

Naza, smiling, shot the arrow, while Bell swayed his blade with a war cry to cut the monster.

Without even a bit of a difference from before, the arrow hit the monster's eye, and after that faltering a flash of the big sword assaulted it.

Cutting through its head until the middle, spurting out fresh blood from the Bradsaurus. Falling on its knees, it crumbled down there.

Following that, as Bell, unable to handle the sword, didn't manage to land normally, this time Naza really let off a little laughter.

“Naza, it’s enough now.”

“Yes…”

While being called by Miach, Naza turned back, still smiling.

After checking on Lili and Hestia, carrying their backpacks, which was swollen up, she looked back at Bell again.

The boy stood up, and picked up the huge sword as if it was a staff, and looked pathetically at them, as if he was asking if it’s okay now. Naza nodded to him.

“Let’s go home, Bell.”

× × ×
Under a very starry night sky.

In front a huge mansion, with its doors wide open, a test tube with a dark blue fluid was held out by someone.

“It’s my familia’s new product. I can guarantee its effectiveness.”

“Wh-wha……!”

Diancecht accepted the test tube with a groan, which Miach was giving to him.

After checking it out with his own eyes too, he handed it over to a member of his organization, Airmid, who was standing next to him, for her expert opinion.

He was looking at it, holding his breath, and at the moment he saw her nodding, after her test-drink, he hanged his head crestfallen.

“A Dual Potion that heals the body and the mind…… It’s a potion that didn’t exist until now. If your familia would sell it, you could make quite a fortune, right? It also goes well with your policy of trying to answer the needs of adventurers.”

“Guhh… guuuuuhh……!”

“A total of twenty of them. I’m sure it’s more than enough for the amount we have to pay this time. Please buy it.”

“Y…Youuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu!?”

A deep roar spreading through the night sky.

Outside the four tall walls around the mansion, Bell and the others, who heard this voice, understood with it, that negotiations have succeeded.

“It seems it went well……”

“That gramps not a fool, he wouldn’t miss a chance to make a fortune. I’m sure he would like to harass us, though… he reap what he sow.”

Said Naza with a snicker after Lili’s muttering.

In front of the huge walls of the Diancecht Familia’s home, Bell and the others were waiting for Miach’s return, who went in alone.

“Well, at any rate, I’m very tired. I was moving all around all day.”

“Ahaha….”

After gathering the eggs, and getting back from the jungle of Thero without a problem, the only thing waiting for Bell and the others was the battle with the time necessary to develop the Dual Potion. While Naza and Miach were struggling to the death to advance with making the potion, Bell and the others helped them too, and did chores, making them continuously busy.

Bell made a wry smile towards Hestia, who looked totally exhausted.

“But, you really did well to make it. A new potion at that last moment.”

“The people of Orario look at only the dungeon, and they don’t try to know the possibilities out of the city…… If they would look around more, they should find out more things.”

Monster eggs, and the wings of the ‘Blue Butterfly’. Exactly because they combined materials from the dungeon and the outer world, they could make a new potion, is what Naza’s answer was.

“Ah, Miach, is it over?”

“Yeah, I settled the matters.”

After a little while Miach went back to Bell and the others coming out of the gate. After explaining that he doesn’t need to worry about getting expelled from his own home, he smiled, then looked at the faces of Hestia and the others in order.

“Please let me thank you again. This is also thanks to you all, I’m really grateful.”

“I’m happy that you could pay back some of your debt.”

“It was worth to give our all.”

Hestia and Lili smiled at each other, then Bell also followed them in that.

After looking fondly at them, Miach lastly turned to Naza.

“Naza.”

“Yes…..”

“Yesterday, you told you were useless, right?”

“…..yes.”

“I never even once thought like that.”

While looking right at Naza’s widely open eyes, Miach said that.

“Being a God as I am, I was saved countless time by you. Even if your physical competence went down compared to earlier, I’m satisfied thanks to you. That’s why, never ever blame yourself again.”

“…..Is that an order?”

“No, I’m pleading you. It comes deep from my heart, who thinks more about you, my child, than anyone.”

Standing in front of her, Miach approached Naza’s head with his hand.

Seeing his gentle gaze, as her chief god was smiling, Naza blushed and looked down. “So thickheaded…..” she murmured quietly, while her head was brushed gently.

After a while, Hestia, who was grinning about Miach’s words that were still leading to misunderstandings, went to make fun of him, and Lili followed her too, enjoying herself. Looking at the teasing of each other from outside, Bell made a wry smile, then Naza left from the group alone and came there.

“Bell, thank you for today. Really…….. Really, thank you.”

“Naza……..”

Now, after expressing her deep gratitude, she looked up, took out a test tube from her pocket, and held it out to Bell.”

“Huh, is this…..”

“Dual Potion……. We couldn’t prepare more than one extra, but…… it’s the reward for the quest, and as my thanks.”

To the surprised Bell, Naza, with those half closed eyes, smiled a little.

“If there is some trouble, tell me. As I was just causing trouble to Bell until now, I will go and help you……”

To the faintly smiling Naza, Bell smiled back from ear to ear.

She accepted the reward from her hands firmly.

Bell’s long long quest was completed at that moment.

**(Complete)**

*Credits to Chaba-san for translating this Short Story.*

**Short Story 2**
Campanella Given to Goddess

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女神へのカンパネラ

“I did it, Kami-sama! I defeated a Goblin!”

“Hah?”

This was during an afternoon when Hestia was currently enjoying reading a book.

With a banging sound, the door was suddenly pushed open with force, a white-haired human boy proudly said this as he appeared.

<Hestia’s Familia>’s Headquarters, Hidden Room inside the Church.

The room that was made from a combination of a square and rectangular space formed a P-shape. It probably considered the resident’s height, as the furniture’s’ height were all extremely short. Casually glancing around, you could vaguely see the paint peeling off from some of the stone walls, and it looked extremely old and tattered everywhere.

While lighting up the only Magic Lamp in the ceiling, Hestia faced her faction’s only member that suddenly opened the door and appeared —— Bell Cranel revealed a surprised expression as if he was suddenly hit on the head.

It was probably because he was too happy, the sight of the boy’s face with a bit of redness looks especially dazzling.

“Goblin……Are you talking about that Goblin? The Monster that is known as the Weakest in the Dungeon?”

“Yes! Actually when I was small, I was nearly killed by that Monster.  I was always very afraid……But today, I finally defeated it!”

“That……Is it only one?”

“Eh?”

“You only defeated one Goblin and you came back from the Dungeon?”

Did you specifically headed down to the Dungeon and only defeated the Weakest Monster and happily returned, after being inquired like this by Hestia, Bell revealed a dumb expression and froze at that spot for a few seconds.

Noticing that being proud of his own victories was indeed a bit hollow, his originally dazzling expression instantly turned into embarrassment. He deeply bowed his head down while using his back to face Hestia.

“I’m extremely sorry, I will go challenge the Dungeon once again……”

“Wa…Wa…WAAA!? Sorry Bell-kun, the words I said just now didn’t mean to blame you……W…Wait a minute!?”

Bell, who had his ears turn bright red due to embarrassment, did not even notice Hestia’s cries and ran out from the door of the headquarters.

3 Days after <Hestia’s Familia> was formed.

Hestia’s encounter with Bell on the street, and recruiting him into her own faction, had only passed this amount of time.

After forming a contract with Hestia, Bell completed the relevant procedures at the guild, and officially became a member of Adventurers. There was no doubt that he, who was the main force of earning money for the Familia, had a burning passion inside of him, and he began to actively take action in an unfamiliar place far away from his homeland.

Hestia, who was keeping watch of Bell-kun, would occasionally find a new side of him and together, they slowly deepened their relationship. Through her cheerful personality and her tolerance as a Goddess, and her slight smile on her petite face, that made others feel that it was intimate, it gently melted the walls inside the somewhat cowardly Bell’s heart. Although they had just encountered each other, it could still be counted as it was completely separate.

In the numerous factions, the <Familia> that have the lowest level of fame would set an easy target to ensure that their funds for their daily lives would not cause complications while they slowly strengthened their organizational structure and cross the somewhat old-fashion starting line.

“I really don’t know what to do at that instant. If you were to just go to the dungeon like that and never came back, even if I am dreaming, it would be terrible.”

“V…Very sorry, I made you worry……”

“Haha, it isn’t much, but this time it was my words that were terrible. The one that should apologize here is me. Sorry, Bell-kun.”

Hestia and Bell were sitting beside the table in their headquarters while they were talking.

Bell-kun, who had once again entered the Dungeon, returned safely. Currently, the sun had already set.  The moonlight from the dazzling night sky could not reach inside their underground base, the two of them were currently having a somewhat late dinner.

The progress of Bell, who had just finished his debut in the dungeon —— 300 Varisu, was quickly spent. Placed on the table were hard breads and an egg dish that they struggled with.

Even though it was very little, the Magic Stone creation that ignites fire still exuded a warm vapor after being used to cook the egg and egg yolk earlier.

“So how was it, your first time challenging the Dungeon? You finally overcame it, right?”

“About this, although I was always nervous and could not properly explore……but with the monsters, that current me can still fight. Goblins or Kobolds, after defeating them once, it becomes very easy.”

In order to celebrate Bell’s first Dungeon exploration, they had prepare this small amount of food.

Although not being able to prepare celebratory wine was a pity, but bringing the sliced bread into their mouth, tasting the deliciousness of the hot scrambled eggs, it allowed Hestia and Bell to smile while they talked.

“But I’m relieved, Bell-kun actually acted like a proper Adventurer. I was somewhat worried, thinking whether you would be chasing other girl’s butts in the dungeon, and running here and there.”

“T…There isn’t, this kind of thing!?”

Towards Hestia’s teasing words, Bell cried out loudly.

Facing the flushed boy who was denying it, Hestia continued to speak, “Really”.

“Didn’t you wish to pursue an encounter with a girl? If you meet a cute Adventurer girl, won’t you leave the Monster and run off the flirt with others?”

“F…Flirt……N…No, it is not because of evil intentions that I want to get along with girls……I only want an encounter! Just like the ones from Hero Stories!”

“Didn’t you say something about a Harem also?”

“H…Harem is a male’s romance. That is something a man will chase after from birth, even the ancient heroes also……”

His cheeks were still very red, Bell closed his crimson eyes as he passionately explained it.

Hestia only gently shrugged her shoulders, then leisurely stared at that face. While watching the remains of the youth and elegant appearance, she was faintly indulged in her thinking.

Bell Cranel, he is a youth that you would feel he was more and more incredible, the more you understand him.

He obviously matured extremely late, but he likes girls. Not only did he seek an encounter with the opposite sex, all his words, his stories did not seem to make sense. Whether it was good or bad intentions, his pure white physique, his abnormal thinking that would often secretly activate, to the extent where it would affect his words and actions.

The reason why Bell's lifestyle was this unstable was probably because of his relationship with his <Grandfather>, Hestia believes.

In the various words spoken by Bell, the relative that took care of him would constantly appear smiling and waving his hands, he had played a key role in forming this boy's personality.

She really did not know what kind of elite education had been placed, Hestia, who had never met with Bell's grandfather, sighed while thinking that it was amazing. If it was not because of the wrong upbringing from his own relative, Bell would not have become the incomplete person he was right now. The roots of Bell, the principle of his actions, there was no doubt that it was produced by his grandfather. The boy's interest in the opposite sex always stemmed from his pursuit of the <Fateful Encounter>.

Due to the stories, the boy had gleaming eyes and wished for a blissful dream.

This was the true face of the boy called Bell Cranel.

Wouldn't it be better if he was born as a girl, Hestia could not help but have such baseless thoughts.

"At that time, my grandfather said. Only when men have an encounter with a female, they would be able to achieve their long-cherished wish. So I……"

"……"

While leisurely looking at Bell's face as he continued to speak lively.

Once again, Hestia increased her knowledge about this boy dependent.

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While Bell threw himself into the Dungeon in order to support the livelihood of the <Familia>, Hestia was also busily working.

Because Hestia had only descended to the Lower World for a short period of time, she had also gone through the days of exploring like Bell, who had just arrived at

Orario. Although she would often feel confused as she was not accustomed to the Lower World, it was a common stimulus that could not be tasted for the ones that descended down from Heavens. This was what the other Gods have called <The Pleasure in the Lower World>, she had indeed felt it.

“Okay, Hestia-chan. This is today’s wage.”

“Thank you, Auntie.”

She gratefully accepted the daily wage from the female beast man.

The place that Hestia works at was located at the North Main Street. Selling mashed potatoes with seasoning, after adding in the flour, and frying it, it becomes a big mouthful food called <Potato Croquettes>.

It was probably used to enhance the flavor of the recovery agents slightly, it was extremely hot.

(One, Two, Three……180 Varisu)

Because today she worked 6 hours, based on a 30 Varisu an hour basis to calculate the wages. Even though if she understood the results from the very beginning, Hestia, who was counting the coins from her palm, still let out a sigh.

Before, she had made a mistake with the ignition device and caused a huge explosion along with the shop——The causalities aside from the completely burnt Hestia was zero——, the loss at that time was taken out by the majority of her salary. This level of salary would still be insufficient in helping share the burden with Bell.

The Lower World, this world was somewhat difficult for the Goddess that had just recently descended down from the Heavens.

Ignoring her own failure, Hestia thought.

“Hey Auntie, as expected you should still join my <Familia>? Right now there is an Adventurer child that joined, everything is going smoothly”

“Ahaha, even if you say such words, it is still not acceptable. Really, Hestia-chan is really clingy”

“Why——, I beg you——“

What had become a daily occurrence of <Familia> persuasion was rejected with a smile, Hestia could only embark on her trip back home.

A reason was also because her faction did not have any fame, but her insufficient height was also a problem.

While she was heading back, Hestia, who was patted on her head and given a potato croquette —— Towards herself who was not treated as a Goddess——, sighed once again.

“Today was really long……”

Placing the potato croquette in her mouth, and moving her bulging cheeks, Hestia headed forward down the streets which were dyed in the colors of dusk.

Usually, she would have already returned back home before the sun had set, but today her work time was lengthened. It was possible that Bell had already returned to the headquarters, this was what Hestia thought as she walked down the streets.

<Hestia’s Familia>’s headquarters, the hidden room inside the church was located in the area between the North-West and West Main Street, she walked from her workplace at North Main Street towards the West.

Through the lined up high-quality brick houses residential street, after a certain area as the division, more and more dirty alleys and filthy buildings began to increase. Passing through in order of the ancient item shop and the lengthwise inns, in front of the wine bar in a small suburb, then the scene will become clear, arriving at the North-West Main Street.

This large street that did not have a guild headquarters is known as the <Adventurer’s Street>, just like its name, many Adventurers were walking around. On both side of the street, there were beautiful shops that were incomparable to what was just seen.

“……Ara?”

As the sun in the west was gradually sinking down below the walls of the city, Hestia, who was passing through the Main Street, suddenly witnessed this scene.

In front of a certain shop stood a white-haired boy.

(Bell-kun……?)

Her own <Familia>’s dependent had his back towards the crowd of Adventurer that were walking in the Main Street, as if he was peeping at something. Bell’s motionless posture that was planted in front of the display window of the shop made Hestia stop.

After a while, Bell would sadly leave the shop. Moving his gaze away from the display window that he stared for a long period of time, he slowly moved away from there.

“……So that’s what happened”

She also peeked into the display window that Bell was enthusiastically looking at, then she understood.

In the display window, there were many weapons placed there. Inside, there were various metal swords that were sharpened, releasing a powerful and beautiful sheen.

Occasionally he would be attracted by it, and even though he knew that it could not be achieved, he would still have the thought and continued to visit this shop.

No matter what, Bell had a strong interest in these decorative weapons.

“Nnnn——Mmm……Okay, then here”

Holding her arms, Hestia began to contemplate. In order to fulfill what the Main God should do for her cute children, she nodded.

It was also because of the thing that happened earlier so she wanted to advocate that she was also a little Goddess among the Gods, and decided to generously give Bell a present.

It should be enough if she used all the wealth that she saved up, Hestia closed her eyes and smiled proudly and decided to enter the shop in front of her eyes.

Thinking about the general direction of Bell's gaze, he probably wanted this dagger. Inside the display window, there was a pure white blade that was placed in the center of the jewelry box. Even in Hestia's eyes, it was extremely beautiful.

At this moment, the price of the dagger caught her eye. With a posture of placing her hand on the door, "Eh?" Hestia narrowed her eyes.

<8 Million Varisu>

Hestia quietly closed the opened door.

(Forgive me, Bell-kun)

This is impossible, while the back of her head continued to let out cold sweat, Hestia cautiously retreated from the door.

The price is too exaggerated. With Hestia's entire wealth, it was just like a powerless Goblin facing a huge dragon.

"Ah, this is....."

Looking at the crimson painted shop, she finally noticed that this shop belongs to her Goddess friend.

The elite Blacksmithing faction <Hephaestus's Familia>. At the same time, it was the <Familia> that took care of Hestia when she first descended down to the Lower World.

Looking at the sign with the world-renown trademark <Ἡφαιστος>, it was obvious that she could not purchase it, so Hestia could only walk away in dismay. Only leaving Bell-kun, who did not know how high the sky was, an atmosphere of not admitting to defeat.

Losing the opportunity to express the Goddess's might, she faced the dark red stone and sighed who knows how many times. Then Hestia arrived at the path that led to her headquarters.

(……My hairband is nearly broken)

While heading forward at the North-West Main Street, Hestia looked at the reflection of her face projected by the shop's display windows.

Using a ribbon that had no distinctive qualities, her beautiful black hair that was tied into twin tails. However, it was worn to the extent that just by looking from the side, you could tell that its life was about to end.

Hestia gently touched the ribbon that was in poor shape, and looked at her own figure that was reflected by the display window with manikins in it.

The manikin wearing a dress was equipped with accessories that were Adventurer's equipment, which gave protective power. Among the shop items that were placed on its body to attract customers, they were all wearing very cute ribbons.

"……"

Looking at the display manikin's blue ribbon for a few seconds, Hestia shook her head a few times, reminding her that she can't, she can't, and turned her face away. As a God, how could she recklessly spend money, this was how she warned herself.

Peek, peek, this kind of wavering sight that glanced at it from the side for a while, had its obsession cut away from it by turning her body away.

Using both hands to hold the ribbon was still enough, she then walked down the small alley to leave the North-West Main Street.

"……"

The crimson eyes that did not honestly go home and was nearby, witnessed the entire event. However, Hestia was not aware of it.

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Then after <Hestia's Familia> had begun for a week.

Hestia, she was looking at the scene with her mouth forming a ﹏ shape.

"S…Sorry, I came back late……"

As if you could hear the tiredness in his voice, Bell stepped through the door to the headquarters.

Looking at the clock, you could see that the clock was pointing at nine in the evening.

"……Bell-kun, I feel that you are overworking a little recently?"

"T…There is no such thing?"

Facing Hestia's expression of having difficulties to inquiry about it, Bell replied with a wry smile "It is completely fine".

These few days, Bell had always been like this.

He would leave the headquarters early in the morning and desperately explore the dungeon, then he would come back late at night. The clothes and armor that he was wearing, and also his body was already in a tattered state.

Although Bell-kun originally held enthusiasm when he selected the Adventurer career, his appearance and attitude right now was completely different than from a few days ago.

"Kami-sama, this is the money I earned from today's exploration"

"Ah, Ahhh……"

*Jingle*, Bell handed over a linen pouch over.
Bell's income from the dungeon exploration would be kept by Hestia as savings for the <Familia>. Of course, most of the money was taken for equipment repairs or funds for exploration, only then a small amount will be kept by Bell as pocket money.

Opening the small pouch and taking a peek inside, she estimated that there was about 500 Varisu. If you consider that the boy had kept 1000 Varisu in preparation for the next exploration, then he had earned quite a bit the past few days. This can truthfully revealed the efforts of Bell-kun diving into the dungeon from morning to night.

However, what was the purpose of him saving money.

"……Hey, Bell-kun"

"Ah, yes?"

"You, what are you hiding from me?"

With his face screaming in fatigue, Bell was about to take a shower and change his clothes. Hestia slowly inquired.

Or rather, it was the God's instincts, even if she was unpromising, but she, as a Goddess, could still feel that Bell was hiding something from her.

After being questioned, Bell shook for a while. It was apparent that this was a suspicious behavior.

"Ah, ahaha……W…What are you saying, Kami-sama. How could I possibly do such a thing?"

"……"

Facing the stiff smile that Bell placed on his face, Hestia stared with half-opened eyes.

Disregarding the unbelievable words and quickly be honest, this sharp glare stabbed into him.

"K…Kami-sama, I'm going to take a shower!?"

"AH!"

Bell, who had cold sweat flowing out, quickly took the clothes he planned to change into and fled into the bathroom. Facing the swift actions, Hestia was stunned and her mood dropped dramatically.

For Bell-kun to hide something, she felt sad, this was what Hestia was considering in her heart.

Hestia had liked Bell-kun to the extent that it was great that he became a dependent of hers.

The boy had respected the Goddess from the bottom of the heart, and also brought gentleness and warmth to the <Familia>.

Watching his awkwardness, watching his dangerous posture, she felt that she must protect him, this kind of protectiveness was stimulated. By the time she noticed it, she had already placed herself on his back.

He wanted to wholeheartedly help Hestia, who had faced various painful experiences when she descended to the Lower World.

Hestia liked Bell's smile that could completely melt away everything else.

"Even though I told him to say it, but he still refused to tell me the truth, right, Bell-kun……"

Therefore, she could not forgive Bell for lying to her.

Was this the arrogance of the Gods when they felt anger when things don't go the way they wish it to, or was it because of the loneliness given from her dependent that was about to become a pillar inside her heart.

Either way, Hestia felt unhappy, extremely unhappy. This kind of feeling became more and more intense.

(It doesn't matter, since the other side plans on doing this……)

Hestia's eyes that looked up, had an unstable light. Bell, who was secretly planning something, is currently using the shower inside the bathroom. Just watch me, she muttered and she walked into the kitchen that was prepared inside the house.

Silently, she quietly began to cook some dishes.

"Ah, Kami-sama……"

"You are tired today, right Bell-kun? I'll make dinner, just wait."

Hestia revealed a slight smile to Bell, who walked out of the bathroom with his changed clothes. Although Bell wanted to say something, he felt relieved facing Kami-sama's smile, who seem to have completely forgotten the previous incident.

Facing the unprepared Rabbit (Prey), Hestia was grinding the blade (knife) with a beautiful smile.

"Okay, Bell-kun. Today we will also update your <Status>."

"Ah, okay."

During a short break after dinner, Hestia naturally proposed this kind of topic.

The unprepared white rabbit honestly listened to her words.

The hidden blade (Knife) under her smile had already finished grinding.

Bell Cranel

Lv. 1

Strength: I 49 – I 58 Endurance: I 5 Dexterity: I 66 – I 72 Agility: I98 – H 107 Magic: I 0

<Magic>

[ ]

<Skill>

[ ]

Sitting on the waist of Bell, who was laying on the bed, Hestia looked at the <Status>.

It was still <Endurance> and <Agility> that had two extreme Statuses. In this short period of time, having <Agility>, this basic ability, surpassing H was a slight surprise. She finished the rest of the work in one go.

(——Okay.)

The update of <Status> had ended, she clapped her hand.

With flashing eyes, Hestia revealed her true nature and launched an attack at the rabbit (Bell) below her.

From the posture of sitting on his waist, *Pata*, it seems like the boy's upper body was pressed downwards.
"!?"

"——Okay, Bell-kun. You already cannot escape now?"

*Nuoo*, Hestia, who issued out this strange sound, placed her face next to Bell's neck. She let out her breathe in the location next to the boy's ears, and changed her deep voice into an interrogating tone.

Bell seems to be trembling violently, as if an electric current had passed through him. His entire face turned red.

“K…Ka…Kami-sama!? What are you doing!?”

“Interrogating. Because you seem to be hiding something from me.”

Bell made a response to the words <Hiding>, but he quickly revealed the embarrassment of having Hestia’s soft body sticking onto his own back.

“You know right, Bell-kun? You cannot lie to gods, oh?”

“Wh…What are you saying……?”

“Ooh~ Preparing to act dumb now?”

Hestia narrowed her eyes.

Bell, who had a red face while shrinking back slightly, had an expression of fear towards his Main God in front of him.

Then, the next instant.

Hestia used both her hands to tightly wrap about Bell’s neck, and tightly held it together. Ignoring everything and hugged it upwards.

“Wait!? K…Kami-sama!”

“Okay, you’re planning to say it now right, say it now Bell-kun!! If it is right now, I can still forgive you!?”

“D…Don’t knowwwwwwww! IIIIIIIIIII did not hide anything from Kami-sama!”

“Stubborn, huh……!”

“HIIIIIIII

Hestia placed her voluptuous twin valleys closely on Bell's back, a sound of something being pressed down came from between them.

Bell, who was wearing nothing on his upper body, was touching with his bare skin on an overwhelming thing's ever-changing attack and issued a cry. From his head to toe, his entire body was dyed red.

Hestia frowned and inserted more strength to her wrist that was around his neck, and pressed her entire body harder.

That night, everlasting cries continued to come out under the abandoned church.

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"Really now, Bell-kun……!"

The following day.

In the end, Bell-kun still did not speak, it made Hestia feel unhappy. Even when she finished her work and was returning, she still did not hide her unhappy expression.

Sitting on the sofa in the headquarters, she violently turned the page of the book she was reading.

(Based on the way he acts, instead of being immersed in dungeon exploration, it seems more like he wants money……It can't be that he was tricked by some weird girl in the dungeon, and was forced to spend money……)

Recalling the expression of Bell-kun, who was immersed in the dungeon, a spicy thought that she would normally have not thought of emerged. Knowing that her own dependent couldn't be stupid to that extent, but it still contributed involuntary to her upset behavior.

So, she should let him live his own life. Although she really wanted to say that, but recalling about when Bell being tricked by the Amazon female, she immediately felt more disappointed, and was angry about her own imagination.

"Eh……?"

*Kacha, Kacha*, the sound of someone walking down the stone steps rang out in the underground base.
He was exceptionally early today, Hestia, thinking that it was Bell who returned, still raised her head from the book, pouting.

Just when she was waiting for the door of her base to be opened, *dondon,* there was a dry knock on the door.
“Excuse me, Hestia.”

“Eh……Miach?”

Betraying Hestia’s expectations, who appeared was a God that was more burly and tall than Bell.

His blue long hair, and the tattered gray robe. The male God, Miach, “Nnn” smiled and nodded at Hestia, who widened her eyes.

“I heard that you formed a <Familia>. Although it is a bit late, I still came to say hello to you.”

“What, did you specially come over?”

Although she and Miach both descended from Heaven, they had only formed a relationship after coming to Orario. Due to the similar circumstances between the two of them, they had forged a friendly relationship. Facing a God friend, who was also not accustomed to the city life and was often taken care of, Hestia revealed a slight smile and walked over.

“Fuhaha, no, I thought about our pride and carefully planned this. There is no need to worry.”

“Haha, there isn’t anything to worry about.”

The primary activity of the <Miach’s Familia> was to sell recovery potions. Because its reputation was low, they would only have customers that walked past. Today was no exception, Miach raised his voice and smiled.

Facing towards Hestia, who said “Then let’s quickly head to the main topic”, he handed over a tube of blue recovery potion over.

“If it sells well, then there will also be celebratory items. Please pray for our safety and accept it.”

“Ahah, sorry. It is a big help.”

“Speaking of which, Hestia. Did you hand over the report about forming a <Familia> to the guild?”

Miach asked Hestia, who was filled with gratitude while accepting the recovery potion.

Eh? She tilted her head, the male God began to explain with a calm attitude.

“Even if it is not for dungeon exploration, when a <Familia> in the Labyrinth City creates a faction, they must report it to the guild. At the same time, there is a registration for the faction.”

Although nominally it was managing the dungeon, the guild was already the ruler that had jurisdiction over the Labyrinth city. The dungeon’s management was directly linked to the safety of the city, at the same time, Orario relied on the profits from the dungeon in order to develop to such an extent. From <Ancient Times> till now, the guild that had completely managed the Dungeon was veritably the manager of the city.

Based on the regulations placed by the organization that also manages the city, <Familia> must also be added.

“Hey, <Familia> will also have to do similar things as Adventurers. Nnnn, since they let us live here, it is a matter of course.”

“I see. This is also < The Pleasures in the Lower World>.”

“Because Heaven basically did not have any troublesome matters.”

Nnnnnnn, the two Gods had a common understanding.

“Then, what should you do? By the looks of it, you still haven’t gone yet. Do you want to come along with me?”

“Can I? To tell the truth, it will help me a lot……”

“Truthfully, I don’t have anything to do later, I’m very free. Compare to having some leisure time, it would be more interesting to decrease an ally’s troubles.”

“That’s a model God.”

“Fuhaha, they often say that.”

While releasing a sense of tiredness that only Gods have, Hestia and Miach left the hidden room in the church.

“Do I have to just record everything down?”

“Nnnn. Don’t forget to sign with <Sacred Text>.”

In the spacious lobby of the guild headquarters.

Adventurers from different factions were moving by themselves, Hestia was asking Miach to confirm things while burying herself in the parchment related to the registration of a faction. Using a stool prepared to add to her height, she began to move the quill on the counter.

The window reflected the faint sunset as it approached night. Because many Adventurers return at this time, there were many humans and demi-humans mixed together at the guild headquarters.

The Hobbit team that walked out of the gold exchange, smiled as they talked. The poor female receptionist who was coldly rejected by the male beast man as she tried to sell her services and the arguing elves and dwarfs. The white marble hall had a variety of different circumstances happening and it was completely bustling.

Here, the small amount of Gods, Miach and Hestia, would occasionally smile as they look at the Adventurers.

“Miach. What does the Level of the <Familia> represent?”

“The guild will grade the <Familia>’s organizational strength…..It is primarily its rank.  It is basically the faction’s size and activities and other relevant content, although it also reflects all the elements, but it is fine to directly interpret it as indicators of combat power.”

Just like the <Status>’s abilities will be ranked from S to I, these ten values. The position of the <Familia> in Orario is also ranked the same. The higher the rank, the more its performance was recognized, and it will also increase the reliability from the guild and other organizations. Of course, respect and fear is also included.

A part of the Gods that could not escape from their game senses would care about enhancing their levels, and fully enjoy it within their hearts.

“Business type <Familia> also need to show appropriate results to be evaluated. And if their rank is higher, it will increase the trust to the surroundings. Customers will also increase.”

“Incidentally, Miach what is you rank?”

“Fuhaha, it’s H.”

The recently established, poor funds and small sized <Hestia’s Familia> is obviously the lowest rank, I.

<Familia> are all targets of taxes, without any exception. However, as the rank increases the amount will also rise.

“I’ll ask you, Hestia. What kind of person is the child in your <Familia>?”

“What now, changing the topic.”

“Nono, maybe we will have a lasting relationship.  It is also the child you chose, I’ve always wanted to know.”

“……White hair, crimson- eyed, male human. His name is Bell Cranel.”

“White hair, crimson eyes, is it…… Nnnn, could it be that person?”

“EH?”

Stopping the quill from moving across the parchment, Hestia looked up.

She stared at the direction where Miach was looking at. In the corner of the hall, a white haired human boy was stopped by a guild employee.

“Bell-kun……”

“Looks like it is. Hmm……It looks like he handed something over?”

Under Hestia’s gaze, Bell seems to nervously open the small box and revealed it to the other side. The half elf girl wearing the guild uniform seems to carefully confirm the item inside the box, then say a few phrases to Bell and laughed.

“Giving a girl items, huh. Fufu, your child isn’t bad.”

“……”

Hestia continued to look at that scene without responding to Miach’s words.

Bell, who was blushing, had his nose pressed by the girl and as if he was trying to hide his embarrassment, he bowed down his head.

(……So that was it.)

The cold gaze she sent out muttered in her heart.

In other words, the reason why he was desperately trying to make money and left for the dungeon early was to give a present to this beautiful half-elf girl.

Hestia’s mood changed dramatically.

Bell waved his hands while his face was flushed red as he was being played around by the girl, who smiled. The seemingly discontent feelings rapidly built up in Hestia.

“Humph.”

“Eh……? Hestia?”

“Sorry, Miach. I’ll head back first.”

Hestia violently handed the completed written documents and submitted it to the counter, apologized to Miach, then she headed out of the guild headquarters by herself. Leaving behind Bell, who did not notice her, and passed through the yard in front of the headquarters.

(Damn it, it really is unsatisfying……)

While she walked forward at the North West Main Street Area, Hestia thought to herself.

Why she felt unsatisfied, she already understood the reason.

The Goddess was possessive. Not to others, but to Bell.

Facing the first dependent she obtained ——an existence she had wished for before ——she could not help but be clingy. She had a sensitive reaction for him to follow someone else’s words. She can’t just love the child. Just look at me, hiding such childishness inside my heart.

Was it because it was Bell so it was like that, Hestia did not know.

Only faintly, if her first contract wasn’t Bell…if her initial encounter wasn’t with him, she could imagine herself without her heart being in such a mess.

(Bell-kun, you idiot……)

As the complex and entwining mixed feelings whirled around, Hestia arrived at her base.

Entering the depths of the room, she threw herself onto her own bed. She frowned and expressed her emotions by covering herself with her blanket, creating a small, round hill.

She forced the matter about Bell away from her head, and in the darkening vision, Hestia mercilessly closed her eyes.

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*Kacha Kacha*.
The sound of the cutlery came from outside.

It gently stimulated the ears and gently woke her up. With her blurry vision, Hestia slowly opened her eyes.

After blinking a few times, she slowly moved her hands to remove the blanket that was covering her.

Her face was gently revealed from the blanket and the Magic Lamp illuminated Hestia's face. She unconsciously narrowed her eyes.

"……"

With a groggy mind and blurry vision, she immediately saw a white figure.

It was moving back and forth between the kitchen and dining table, and it was trying not to make a sound as it gently moved on the ground.

Soon, a faint aroma of soup drifted out.

"……"

Removing the other blanket that covered her body, she slowly lifted her upper body.

The white figure immediately noticed and turned his head and approached Hestia.

"Good morning, Kami-sama."

"……Yes."

Towards the gently smiling Bell, Hestia nodded her head.

Raising her head, she noticed that it was already 7 o' clock at night. Her consciousness was shrouded in a dazed-like state for a few seconds, then Hestia attempted to wake it up and shook her head.

Her hairband on her twin tails, *patapata,* shook left and right.
"……Did you prepare it?"

"Yes. Because Kami-sama seems to be tired……Sorry, I did it by myself."

A simple salad, peeled potatoes and the recently made soup was on the table.

The soup was placed into a lovely wooden bowl, and exuded a lukewarm heat.

"Today you came back earlier than ever."

Wanting to cover the scene she saw earlier on and due to the small things that warmed and made her happy, Hestia could not help but use an ironic tone.

"Did you encounter something good?" Towards her, who refused to look at him in the eye, Bell revealed a shocked expression, then shortly, he began to blush slight and temporarily walked away.

He had his back towards Hestia as he took something out from the cupboard, then he came in front of her again.

"That, this……Kami-sama, please accept it."

"……Eh?"

What was handed out was a small box.

Hestia froze for a moment while widening her eyes, she slowly accepted the small box.

She opened the box, inside there was a pair of ribbons.

A ribbon with blue petals on top of it and was trimmed with tiny silver bells.

“Bell-kun, this is……”

“K…Kami-sama’s ribbon that she is using now seems to be broken, so about that, how should I put it……”

A present……Bell muttered with a tiny voice that was about to disappear.

Hestia was really stunned his time. She widened her eyes and looked at the boy, who was gently bowing his head and had his bangs covering his red face.

The familiar small box that the hairband was in, was the item that Bell had showed to the half-elf girl in the guild headquarters.

It wasn’t for her, but rather to confirm whether the quality was good or bad——In the perspective of the same sex, will they like this present—— and inquired about this.

Recalling the expression of the girl playing around with Bell, Hestia realized her mistake.

(Speaking of which, so I was seen……)

A few days ago, the matter about her looking at the display window at the North West Main Street.

Looking at the hairband that was similar to the one on the doll she was interested in, Hestia understood.

“I…I did not plan on hiding it, but I didn’t feel that it was something I could say without an apparent reason, so…s…sorry.”

“……”

Staring at Bell, whose words were becoming incoherent, Hestia quietly smiled.

Both her cheeks turned red, but on the other hand, she felt unsatisfied.

Even though she had easily given up on giving a present to Bell, he completely did not do that.

Bell's thoughts were larger than hers, and they were gentler as well.

"So in order to give this to me, you stayed longer in the dungeon exploring?"

"About that, yes.....Yes, I did."

"You're really an idiot....."

It must not have been cheap. Hestia thought as she looked at the high-quality ribbons.

In order to earn money, he had explored the dungeon every day for numerous days. He would return with his body filled with fatigue. There must be times when he was even in danger.

Hestia closed her eyes, and slowly relaxed her expression.

"Bell-kun.

"Y...Yes."

"Help me put that on."

"Ha?"

"It is your gift. I want you to help me put it on."

Looking at the flustered Bell, Hestia exposed a smile and pulled his hand.

She came up before the mirror and sat down on a chair. Looking directly above her, she spoke to Bell, who was standing behind her, to hurry up and revealed a smile.

Bell, who was terrifyingly disturbed, finally made up his mind. He nervously picked up the ribbons and carefully extended his hand.

"Bell-kun, thank you.....Also, I'm sorry."

"Eh?"

“Ohoh, nothing.”

Hestia revealed a faint smile towards Bell, who was afraid of touching her hair.

While staring at the boy’s expression filled with hardship through the mirror, Hestia heard the sound of her chest calming down.

The moment his hands touched her dark black hair, Hestia seemed to narrow her eyes just like a cat and entrusted herself to this comfortable time.

“……Hey, Bell-kun.”

“Yes?”

“Meeting you, and you becoming my first dependent……I am very happy.”

She quietly convey these thoughts, Bell suddenly stopped his hand.

Then slowly, as if he was really happy, he innocently smiled.

“I also felt that meeting with Kami-sama was really great.”

The smile reflected by the mirror. Hestia also responded with a faint smile while her cheeks were slightly red.

——she will love this child.

The tiny Goddess understood this point.

No matter what time it is, she will want to watch over him and the story engraved on his back. Hestia was only looking forward to that time.

Shortly after, above the clumsily tied up twin tails.

A small silver bell rang out, playing a clear sound.

# Reference

1. Master of Ceremonies. The host of the event. ≥
2. Ares, Greek God of War. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ares ≥
3. Uranus, Greek God personifying the Skyhttp://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uranus_(mythology) ≥
4. Set, Ancient Egyptian God of Desert, Storm, Disorder, etc.http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Set_(mythology) ≥
5. Burning Fighting Fighter is most likely a reference to OreShura. ≥
6. A Hell Realm in which the dead who have committed grave misdeeds may be rebornhttp://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Av%C4%ABci ≥
7. Ishtar, Goddess of Fertility, Love, War and Sex http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishtar ≥
8. Ant's Hell = hopeless situation. It is a trap a larval Antlion builds to capture prey. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antlion#Etymology *Credits to the anonymous reader who mentioned this.* ≥
9. Little Brother, referring to Bell. ≥
10. Although I left it as Beautiful Tail Brilliant Hand 美尾爛手 sounds similar to ビオランテ, which is Biollante, from Godzilla vs. Biollante. *Not a big fan so I never noticed it, credits to UNAP for noticing this.* ≥
11. It means how Lili had always helped them work efficiently together as well as protected them. Since a Lubricant Oil allows parts to be protected and work efficiently. ≥
12. Smithing tongs. ≥
13. Probably referring to Seirei Tsukai no Blade Dance. Another Light Novel. ≥
14. Note that it is family, not Familia. ≥
15. For the activation chant, the japanese part is 外法の業, not too sure how to translate it. ≥
16. This basically means that you need to work hard to find one. ≥

**Credit: Jn, Ruepon, Aravyre, Aryder1990**

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